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COMMONWEAL

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GRAHAM GREENE 1904–1991: THE SOURCES OF DESIRE
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A WEALTH OF NOTIONS
Mel Piehl

A SYLLABUS FOR PROGRESS
David R. Carlin, Jr.

FROM LEO XIII TO JOHN PAUL II
J. Bryan Hehir

DROPPING IN ON THE SHAKERS
Paul Elie

BROKEN PIECES
Deborah Smith Douglas

Stage:
GERALD WEALES on Neil Simon

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CORRESPONDENCE

Helping Catholics sing

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: A postscript to the discussion of church music [Correspondence, March 22] prompted by Archbishop Weakland's review [January 15] of Thomas Day's book, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*. I don't know whose side I am on, but since my suggestion is essentially practical, it doesn't matter much. I merely want to call attention to a traditional vehicle eminently well suited to lay participation in Catholic liturgy: Gregorian chant.

Last year for the Easter triduum our pastor, aware that Spanish-, English-, and French-speaking parishioners would all be present, decided that the most sensible language to use, at least for some of the hymns, would be Latin. He was rewarded when our motley congregation sang the presanctified host to the repository with a repetition of the *Pange lingua* that was as elegant as it was eloquent.

Not that we must always sing in Latin. The musical high point of the Mass I attend is the Our Father, sung *a capella* to the chant that has been part of the liturgy for how many years. The rest of the Ordinary we sing to an unobjectionable but not very inspiring contemporary setting, except for the *Gloria*, which is in chant (but it is less than satisfying because it is too repetitious for so long a prayer).

If I were the cantor or organist of a parish, I would choose a Gregorian Mass, neither too elaborate nor too simple—perhaps the Mass for the Virgin, which was IX in the book we used when I encountered chant in my Benedictine boarding school, and teach it not directly to the congregation, which is daunting, nor to a choir, since the choir is by definition separate from the congregation, but to a cadre of those who attend a given Mass regularly; not professionals but people musical enough to make the experiment work. Spread them around the church during Mass so that others can learn from them. That is, after all, how a good many learned that Our Father. I recall with pleasure the Midnight Mass during which I shared the fruits of my Benedictine education with those around me, including my musician husband, whom I led in Credo III.

We seem to have searched in scattered fashion for twenty-five years when we already have what we need. No, Gregorian chant is not the musical idiom of the day, whatever in these times that chances to be, but need it be? It was created to do exactly what music for the Mass ought to do, put those who participate in it in touch with eternity.

MARIAN BURKHART

Not-so-common sense

Gars am Inn, Germany

To the Editors: James F. Drane's article, "Condoms, Aids, & Catholic Ethics" [March 22], is timely, the fruit of competence and common sense. From various sources I know how plagued are the efforts to stop the spread of AIDS in Africa—frequently because of blockage by Catholic bishops who follow the line of thought of Monsignor Cafarra, et al, or—probably in most cases—who simply are conformists, accepting the African principle, "The chief never speaks against the paramount chief."

It is refreshing that Catholic lay people of high competence and free from ideology become more and more influential in the church. *Commonweal* can be proud of a long and successful history of lay responsibility. Thank you!

BERNARD HÄRING, C.SS.R.

The writer, a peritus *at the Second Vatican Council, is the author of a number of works on moral theology, including* The Law of Christ.

Compelling logic

New Haven, Conn.

To the Editors: In a sense, I was pleased to see the cogently-reasoned piece by James F. Drane. Pleased because it was such a good piece. Not pleased, because it should not have been necessary. Anyone minimally familiar with the principles of moral-theological reasoning will recognize the argument as compelling, and obvious. That the argument should be evaded by those whose profession is such reasoning is a disgrace, and worse, a crime.

BRUCE M. RUSSETT

The writer, Dean Acheson Professor of International Relations and Political Science at Yale University, was a principal consultant to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the drafting of the 1983 pastoral letter, The Challenge of Peace.

Phone this number

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: The Father in "Father, I'm Pregnant (What Do You Suggest?)" [April 5] could give his questioner the phone number of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse: (202) 842-1919. We could immediately provide her with a list of crisis pregnancy centers, shelters, and residences for pregnant women in her locality or in any other state, and the phone number of her state adoption specialist.

If she wished, she could speak to our counselor about the variety of alternatives to abortion or even adoption. We can do a data-base search for her on any adoption-

(Continued on page 302)

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COMMONWEAL

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The postwar war

The Kurds on the Turkish border, in Iran, and within Iraq are the most visible sign of the war after the war. Their tragic condition is also a reminder of the war before the war, of the chronic hostilities between Saddam Hussein, supported by the Baathist party, and the Iraqi people, especially the Kurds and the Shiites. The Kurds' near-constant state of rebellion against Baghdad has been regularly and brutally suppressed. The memory of the 1988 uprising, put to an end with chemical weapons, sent hundreds of thousands of civilians fleeing in March, some under fire, many in panic at the assault of the Iraqi army. It is this memory that feeds their reluctance to return home.

As the Kurdish and Shiite uprisings unfolded, there was an obvious question. Should the coalition have pursued the Iraqi army to Baghdad and deposed Saddam Hussein? For the sake of the Kurds and the Shiites, it is tempting to see this as the better course. But who could have agreed to it? The prospect of more fleeing Iraqi soldiers being bombed and burned would have been intolerable. And extending the war's goals would have caused a political storm in the UN, in Europe, and possibly the U.S. The Gulf War stopped when and where it should have; it is Iraq's chronic internal wars that need to be brought to an end.

Can this happen if Saddam Hussein remains in power? Return to the Kurds and the Shiites. How is it that a country in shambles, on the brink of epidemic and famine, without food, fuel, and potable water—in "near-apocalyptic" conditions according to UN officials visiting Baghdad in mid-March—could still unleash an army with the resources and audacity to war against its own citizens? If Hussein can pursue total control under these conditions, what can possibly stop him when conditions are alleviated?

As U.S. troops pull back in southern Iraq, others—U.S., British, and French—are moving into the north to create safe havens for the Kurds. We could hardly do less, and a great deal more will be required. Above all the Kurds must be returned safely to their towns and cities with international guarantees for their future security. They have said that this means that Saddam Hussein must go. They are right. His continuation in power not only threatens their security, but postpones the end of the embargo and a new start for all Iraqis. If he cannot be removed by the Iraqi army and sent into exile, then trial before an international tribunal ought to be pursued as several European nations have now proposed. The chronic hostilities within Iraq will not completely cease with his dispatch, but it is the key to Iraq's rehabilitating and rebuilding itself.

The energy and skill brought to the war over Kuwait seem to have dissipated all round—with George Bush as with the UN. The international effort to save the Kurds is a sobering reminder, if one is needed, that no party will walk away as easily or as quickly as it had planned. As Clausewitz might have said, had he known the Middle East—the war continues by other means.

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HOLE IN A BAG

Last month, the White House fired Under Secretary of Commerce Dennis Kloske. Kloske had testified before a House foreign affairs subcommittee that in the spring of 1990 the Bush administration had disregarded his recommendations to reduce the export of sophisticated technology to Iraq. (From 1985-90, the U.S. approved $1.5 billion in sensitive materials to Iraq, materials with possible military application, such as computers, chemicals, and telecommunications equipment.) But the key to the Kloske sacking was not the content of his testimony—a number of columnists at the time criticized Commerce's willingness to sell military-related materials to Iraq—but the fact that the Bush administration felt it had to silence him for raising the question again.

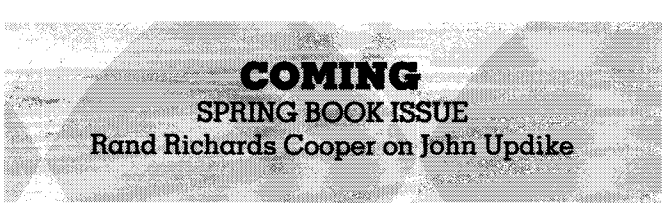
Not only is criticism from within frowned on by the Bush White House—as Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf found following his interview with David Frost—but so is basic news reportage. The most obvious example, the war with Iraq. The government controlled nearly all information disseminated by U.S. news organizations for the duration. It severely limited the access of reporters to information, restricting them to a "pool" system employed during the Grenada and Panama invasions. Under that protocol, a small number of reporters were selected to represent the entire press corps, were observed at all times by military escorts, and were required to submit their material to military censors prior to release.

When *New York Times* reporter Chris Hedges attempted to cover an unauthorized story (interviewing Saudi shopkeepers) he was detained by the U.S. military and his credentials briefly withdrawn. More disturbing was the self-censorship adopted by members of the media, not only concerning the material they filed, but in monitoring their own colleagues. Robert Fisk of the London *Independent* recounted that a member of one pool, an NBC reporter, turned him in to the U.S. military for being in an unauthorized area. What was alarming was that by going to Khafji, Fisk had discovered that the battle was still raging there "long after the prime minister had claimed...that it had been liberated."

When Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio) complained to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney about the degree of press control, she was greeted with groans from members of both parties. Furthermore, a poll released in late March by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press found that better than eight-in-ten Americans rated news coverage of the war excellent or good, and that by a two-to-one majority, those polled felt that military censorship was more important than the media's ability to report on the war.

Information control, of course, was not limited to the U.S. or by the U.S. government alone. There were, in fact, embarrassing parallels between how information was controlled here and in Iraq. In a letter to the Finnish weekly news magazine *Soumen Kuvalehti* (February 15), a man who gave his name only as Musa described life in Baghdad under siege: "Now there are flying and exploding things all above and around us. Nevertheless, on the radio it is said the damages are not great, there are not many dead, nothing is hit; however, we hear explosions, we see fires, ruins, and blood."

When members of the U.S. government, such as Mr. Kloske, are silenced for disagreeing with a given policy, that may prove foolhardy in the long-run. But when the people of a republic themselves no longer wish to hear the information needed to make informed judgments about their government's actions, when they do not protest that their access to necessary information has been curtailed by governmental fiat, that is an alarming development and has profound implications for a democratic society. Just how profound can be ascertained from another passage in Mr. Musa's letter: "We have a feeling here [in Baghdad] that we're living in a bag with a small hole, and through that hole is pushed that information which is thought to be needed in the bag." Is the same thing happening here? Do we care as much about our situation as Mr. Musa does about his?



PHILIP BURNHAM, R.I.P.

Philip Burnham, former editor of *Commonweal*, died April 6 at his home in Tucson, Arizona, after a long illness. He was eighty years old. How can we measure the extent of all he contributed to *Commonweal*? A native of Kenilworth, Illinois, he came to the magazine as a protégé of George Shuster in the early 1930s. By dint of taking only a token salary for his new responsibility as coeditor, he helped rescue the magazine in 1938 at a time when its owner, the Calvert Publishing Corporation, was sorely indebted.

Under his influence, *Commonweal* became more intent on the cause of social justice and on the liturgical reforms that were achieved later at Vatican II. Philip Burnham had a leading part in the magazine's historic Spanish Civil War neutrality statement of 1938, opposing the Franco crusade of the American Catholic press. He served with distinction in World War II from 1941 on, and after the war returned to the magazine. But in 1949, as he felt that the more conservative views he had developed during the war and its aftermath were not in harmony with those of his fellow editors, he resigned.

To work alongside Philip Burnham for the objectives we believed in was a privilege. We treasured his companionship, the stimulus of his ideas, his firm but gentle assurance in controversy. His extensive contribution to the forming and survival of *Commonweal* should long be remembered.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN

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GRAHAM GREENE, 1904–1991

THE SOURCES OF DESIRE

A WRITER'S CONDITION

Evelyn Waugh, a "dear friend," was doubtful about his theology, the Holy Office about his "paradoxes," Anthony Burgess about his philosophical acuity, Paul Fussell about his grammar, Shirley Temple about his intentions, the U.S. State Department about his politics, the Nobel Prize committee about his popularity—the list goes on. So will the enormous affection and gratitude in which Graham Greene is held by millions of readers.

Greene died April 3 in Switzerland. He was eighty-six, and had lived in Antibes, France, for many years. As a man and a writer who had famously sought out danger and had often despaired of life, he came to marvel at his unexpected longevity, amused that he had lived to such a conventional old age. Still, he continued doing what he had done all his adult life: two-hundred words every day, written out in longhand. "I can't see how anyone who does not write, paint, or compose can get through life at all," he said. "So I go on writing: the escaper's royal road—it always has been."

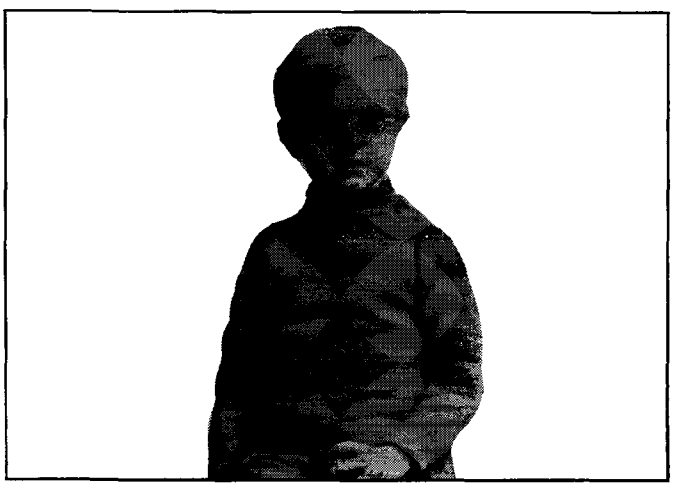
Greene was a longtime subscriber as well as an occasional contributor to this magazine. In *Commonweal*'s drab, virtually antique gun-metal gray file drawer, the index card for the author of *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* comes unceremoniously after George Greene, a book reviewer, and before Pat Ryan Greene, who made a one-time appearance in these pages. There are six entries on the yellowing, oversized index card, each noting the title of the piece published, the date, and the amount paid. Greene's name is written, in fountain pen and in a voluptuous script indebted to the Palmer Method, on the faint red line at the top of the card. The same formal hand recorded Greene's first four contributions, beginning January 10, 1949, with the short story "The Hint of an Explanation." After the story, "The Church Militant," published January 6, 1956, the hand and the pen change. With the slippery efficiency of ball point, we seem to enter a more utilitarian age, one reflected in a hurried and unornamented writing style—and one that fittingly paralleled in Greene's own life a deepening alienation with the modern, especially an increasingly Americanized world.

Greene had a well-publicized argument with America, especially with U.S. foreign policy. He objected to the smug moral posturing that frequently advanced American interests abroad. More profoundly, he had an almost instinctive revulsion toward the American sense of providential election, of our utopianism and our eagerness to shed the constraining but humanizing complications of the past. Of the doomed CIA agent Alden Pyle in *The Quiet American*, his prescient novel about Vietnam, Greene's English war correspondent wrote: "From the moment I first saw Pyle my instinct was to protect him. There was greater need to protect myself. Innocence always calls mutely for protection, when we would be so much wiser to guard ourselves against it; innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm."

Greene thought such evangelical Americanism a grotesque moral distortion. He thought it better to be wrong—even horribly wrong—out of honest, if fallible, motives than to live in a suburbanized world blind to the essential tragedy of the human condition, oblivious to death and suffering, and therefore inevitably oblivious to God. If we anaesthetize ourselves to suffering, we cut ourselves off from God, he suggested. This sense of the ineluctably fallen nature of mankind helps to explain Greene's stubborn loyalty to such dubious figures as Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos and the Soviet spy Kim Philby, for whom Greene once worked in British intelligence. "'He betrayed his country'—yes, perhaps he did," Greene wrote of Philby's misplaced allegiance to communism. "But who among us has not committed treason to something or someone more important than a country?" An extreme rationalization? Perhaps. But while Greene's plots (and opinions) could be melodramatic, he rarely made the mistake of confusing either happiness or prosperity with moral virtue.

Greene's final contributions to *Commonweal*, published January 16, 1981, were two brief excerpts from *Ways of Escape*, the continuation of his autobiography. A drawing of Greene, forefinger pressed across his upper lip in a gesture of thoughtfulness and concealment, appeared on the cover. "How I Became a Catholic Writer" is the headline. Of course, Greene bristled at the attempt to pigeonhole him as a "Catholic writer." ("Detestable term!" he complained.) "I am a writer who happens to be Catholic." And indeed his talent was hardly parochial. Although not an innovator in the modernist style of Joyce or Faulkner, his narrative skills were formidable. He was a craftsman of a high order, with a brilliant gift for metaphor. With his remarkable moral intelligence and empathy, Greene created lives that, like the work of the greatest novelists, became as real to us as our own.

The explicitly Catholic ideas in his novels were his characters', not his own, he said. It was history, the religious persecutions in Mexico and the Spanish Civil War, that brought Catholicism



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forcibly into his writing. "Clumsy life again at her stupid work," Greene said. A convert, he did not come to an emotional understanding of his faith until he went to Mexico to report on the revolutionary left-wing repression of the church. There he was struck by the "terrible paradox of human goodness," the mysterious connection between suffering and faith. "Courage and the sense of responsibility had revived with persecution," he wrote of the peasants who risked their lives to attend Mass. In *The Power and the Glory*, he embodied the paradox in "the idealistic police officer who stifled life from the best possible motives; the drunken priest who continued to pass it on."

After Mexico, Catholicism was no longer "merely symbolic" for Greene, but "closer now to death in the afternoon." Subsequently, he explored the "the mystery of 'the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God"' in much of his work. He eventually came to call himself a "Catholic agnostic," someone who had faith but found it difficult to believe. This kind of equivocating distinction disturbed Waugh, who wrote that he found Scobie's sanctified suicide—the death of a man overcome by pity—in *The Heart of the Matter* "totally unintelligible."

Greene's Catholicism was idiosyncratic, with seemingly a strong element of Manicheism or Jansenism in his work. As John Updike observed, "The world gets a grim report in his fiction." In *Ways of Escape,* Greene wrote admiringly of the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, and especially of Unamuno's *The Tragic Sense of Life*. "Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their hearts, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God Idea, not God himself," Unamuno wrote. Traditional rational proofs "prove no more than the existence of (the) idea of God," Unamuno claimed. Catholicism's genius was that it "satisfies the will, and therefore satisfies life" while recognizing that the urge to rationalize faith can never "satisfy the mind."

Clearly, Greene felt the greatest affinity with this heterodox Catholicism. Greene's work is filled with the failure of faith. But human failure is never the final measure. The greater sin—the inhuman temptation—is not in being unable to believe, but in not wanting to. "I believe; help my unbelief," the Apostle relates, and Greene assents. "Faith is in essence a matter of will," Unamuno wrote, "just as to believe is to want to believe, and that to believe in God is to wish, above all and before all, that there may be a God." That ardent desire—that aboriginal hunger for God even when wrapped in the most modern pessimism—is what characterized Greene's work and presumably his life.

Looking back, Greene traced the origins of that compulsion to childhood. On January 14, 1955, *Commonweal* published something Greene called "A Personal Note." Barely a page long, it's titled "The Revenge" and describes how as a thirteen and fourteen-year old Greene was tormented by his peers at school. "At that period of my life I had very few friends," he wrote. His father was the headmaster of the school, and this of course placed him in an insupportable position, at once complicit with the authorities and allied with those under subjugation. As Greene has noted, these double allegiances and double suspicions were his first introduction to the ambiguities of life as a secret agent. His principal tormentors were named Carter and Watson. Carter was malicious (he devised a "system of mental torture") but honest. Watson's crime was more heinous, for he betrayed Greene. "Alone he (Watson) would have had no power to hurt. None the less it was on Watson that I swore revenge, for with his defection my isolation became almost complete."

An opportunity for retribution did not immediately present itself. "For many years when I thought back on that period, I found the desire for revenge alive like a creature under a stone," Greene wrote. "The only change was that I looked under the stone less and less often. I began to write, and the past lost some of its power—I wrote it out of me. But still every few years a scent, a stretch of wall, a book in a shelf, a name in a newspaper, would remind me to lift the stone and see the creature move its head towards the light."

Even in childhood, evil carves out its sure place in our hearts. The problem of evil, and the even more burdensome Christian notion that suffering has a transcendent meaning—that in its very negation evil somehow exposes the terrible consolation of God's presence—lies at the heart of Greene's fitful faith.

Greene tells us how he bumped into Watson nearly thirty years later, in 1951, in Kuala Lumpur. Stunned, Greene was strangely unmoved by the reappearance of his betrayer. He agreed to meet with Watson again in a few days, an appointment he did not keep. "I wondered all the way back to my hotel whether I would have ever written a book if it had not been for Watson and the dead Carter, if those years of humiliation had not given me an excessive desire to prove that I was good at something, however long the effort might prove. Was that a reason to be grateful to Watson or the reverse?"

Indeed. Greene is forever forcing our gaze toward the maddening paradoxes linking hate and love, destruction and creation, revenge and justice. For in Greene's own life the impetus to his most sincere and generous accomplishments—his greatest gifts to others—came out of his darkest temptation and sorrow. "The basic element I admire in Christianity is its sense of moral failure," Greene said. "That is its very foundation." From the bringing forth of new life in sorrow to the impersonal detachment and solipsism of the artist, there is something painful and violent, something that shadows if it does not partake of evil, in all human creativity and love. Or so Greene insisted. As the story of Genesis implies, our humanity is predicated on our understanding that the knowledge of good and evil is the fruit of one tree: we can't know one without knowing the other. This is the world in which Greene's troubled characters move, and in which their desire to live and love is in some mysterious way also their desire to know God. Intended or not—and often with the best intentions—the will to love and be loved, to know and be known by the world, brings suffering to those closest to us. That is our condition—human betrayal, after all, is at the heart of the gospel story. Few novelists have described that spiritual predicament with more personal honesty and humility, with a more generous curiosity and understanding of human variety and need, or out of a greater desire for God than did Graham Greene.

PAUL BAUMANN

Paul Baumann is the associate editor of Commonweal.

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A SIGHTSEER AT HOME

DROPPING IN ON THE SHAKERS

MORE FOR GOD'S EYES THAN FOR OURS

Past the turnoff for the Albany county airport is the Shaker settlement, a simple compound—houses, hall, workshop, barn. I coasted vaguely toward it, then turned off, the tires of my father's bike springy on the gravel. On the service road now, I slowed down where the pavement rippled, wondering if even the most visionary Shaker prophetess could have foreseen speed bumps.

This was a Saturday in my hometown, Colonie, New York, a suburb of Albany. Back from Manhattan for the weekend, I was out to refresh my senses in familiar sites. The old Shaker village wasn't one of them. Down the road were places I remembered from my childhood—Ann Lee Pond, where I'd skated, Ann Lee Home, where I'd caroled, Heritage Park, where I'd watched minor-league baseball: but I had never visited the spot "here in the valley of the wilderness," as a roadside sign put it, where Ann Lee and company founded America's first Shaker settlement. Near the largest building, I put my feet down.

Long and low, of brown brick, with wood siding painted the color of butterscotch, the building once had been the Shakers' meeting house. Now it bore signs for the Shaker Heritage Society and the Museum Shop. "Tours by Appointment," said a placard on the door. The settlement seemed deserted, though, like a tiny college in summer—so I straddled the bike and began to tour the place privately, suddenly a sightseer in my own hometown.

Cantering around to the meeting house's long east wall, I squinted through a high window at the meeting room: here, I supposed, Shakers had worshipped, fashioned quilts, eaten some sort of mealy mush from wooden bowls. Behind the meeting house, to my surprise, was a parking lot, the yellow lines freshly painted, two of the spots marked with a stylized wheelchair motif. Opposite it was a more conventional house—also brick-and-butterscotch, with a two-story screened porch—that signs identified as an office of the nearby county nursing home.

I hesitated a moment, half afraid that some blasé social servant would discover me and embarrass away my sense of wonder. Then, confidently alone, I admired the house's peaked roof, its clapboard siding, its high upper windows, which I imagined were those of the old bedrooms. What had gone on in this house where celibacy was required of all? Was it just a simple nineteenth-century house, one of many in the area, or did it embody the graceful, ascetical, profound simplicity that the Shakers are admired for? I wheeled toward the barn, amazed at my naiveté. I had gone to Shaker High School, worn the sect's name on my gym shorts, but all I knew of the Shakers were a few isolated bits of cultural literacy: that they made sturdy stuff and forbade conjugal love.

I know more now. Back in New York, reading up on the subject in Columbia's library, I learned that Mother Ann Lee (1736-84) was the foundress of the Shaking Quakers, a sect named for the way its adherents would pray themselves into "a mighty trembling, under which they would express the indignation of God against all sin." She came from England to America in 1774, believing that she was the female Messiah, as Jesus was the male one. With eight others she settled in Colonie, establishing what came to be called the Watervliet Society of the United Society of Believers in Christ's First and Second Appearing. Though she died in 1784, the Shakers flourished, founding twenty-one other communities in twelve states during this country's Second Great Awakening. And in 1837, "miracles of enthusiasm" at the Watervliet settlement—visions, ecstasies, spoken commands from God—announced a "new era" for the Shakers, known as Mother Ann's Second Appearing.

A friend told me that Emerson described Shaker miracles as "gleams of a better light—occasional examples of the actions of man upon nature with his entire force." After growing to four thousand members by 1845, the Shakers dwindled in numbers, a story of attrition that is well known. Most of the Shaker communities closed around the turn of the century; the Watervliet settlement was sold in 1938.

Though I insisted otherwise, an old school friend told me that we'd been taught about the Shakers when we learned New York history. Even so, from a 1989 *National Geographic* article sent to me by my younger sister I learned as if for the first time the ambiguous facts of Mother Ann's estate. Two former Shaker settlements are used as state prisons; another is a housing development. And the two Shaker communities that are still active have feuded for a quarter century now. While the Canterbury (N.H.) community "closed the covenant" in the 1960s, the Sabbathday Lake (Maine) community has continued to initiate new members—five in all. This has prompted the New Hampshire community to deride the Maine one as "the least of Mother Ann's children in the East" and at one point to withhold funds from the Shaker treasury, which is thought to have swelled to at least $5 million from the sale of Shaker property and handicrafts.

As the vibrant Shaker communities become more remote in time, interest in Shaker furniture and crafts continues to grow. *Time* art critic Robert Hughes has written the introduction to a hundred-dollar volume that reproduces Shaker quilts. Last year the upscale New York weekly *7 Days* pictured a Shaker chair on its cover, to illustrate an article about "essentialism," a new interior-decorating trend. And when I revisited the Watervliet settlement before Christmas, the museum shop was crowded with people who had come to buy Shakerish gifts at a crafts fair in the adjacent meeting hall.

It seems possible that Shaker theology will undergo a similar renascence, since in many ways it anticipated current movements in liberal religion. The Shakers believed that God has both male and female natures, considered men and women equal, and sought to embody a theology of immanence in their useful, innovative objects, among them the clothespin, the flat broom, and per-

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manent-press fabric. Their small, close-knit communities call to mind the Latin American *communidades de base.* Shaker asceticism, admired by Thomas Merton a generation ago ("The peculiar grace of a Shaker chair," he wrote, "is due to the fact that it was made by someone capable of believing that an angel might come and sit on it"), was surprisingly willing to accommodate progress: though they renounced the world, Shakers acquired telephones and automobiles soon after these had been invented, like the hippie throwbacks who spread the message of simple living on Macintosh-user networks. And perhaps the Shakers' rapid decline in numbers one hundred and fifty years ago will provide an analogy, inexact but telling nonetheless, as Catholics reflect with growing concern on the church's rule of clerical celibacy.

Knowing all this, I feel a vague sense of kinship with the Shakers. As I eat at a homemade work table and take books from pine shelves fashioned in a friend's basement, I'm proud to know about the people who built more graceful versions of these at the settlement only a mile or so from where I later grew up; shopping in Colonie's malls during my trips home, I'm proud to know that while *I* wouldn't renounce the world, *someone* back there once did.

That afternoon, though, I felt ignorant, profoundly so. The barn was before me, faded like driftwood. I dismounted from the bike, vexed by the laws that discourage talk of religion in public schools: surely students at Mencken Grammar and Norman Rockwell High are taught their namesakes' histories. Why did I know so little about the miracles of enthusiasm in my hometown? Why had I never been shown this spot, not merely old and thus historic, but the place where a religion had come to life?

Then, as I stood reflecting, a couple of goats ambled out of the barn. I stared at them, they at me. They might have been two in a long line of Shaker goats—the sect's only descendants, I supposed. I recalled the Shakers' demise, in the manner of one culturally literate, as a sort of highbrow Helen Keller joke: *No sex allowed—of course they died out! What did they expect?*

Maybe, I thought, they expected private moments of discovery like mine. For like their furniture and their dwellings, my basic unawareness of the Shakers seemed to be a product of their spirit. What but asceticism is this, to forgo descendants who will keep you in the curriculum? What but purity is this, to bear witness, in the end, more for God's eyes than for ours?

PAUL ELIE

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OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

A SYLLABUS FOR PROGRESS

LEO XIII PLAYS CATCH-UP

May 15, 1991, is the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Pope Leo XIII's landmark encyclical letter, *Rerum novarum.* By late twentieth-century standards, *Rerum novarum* is tame stuff. For that matter, by late nineteenth-century standards it was pretty tame stuff too. The encyclical recognized the right of labor unions to exist, but balanced this with an emphatic endorsement of the rights of private property. It denounced the evils of capitalism, but it denounced socialism in an even more unqualified way. It is replete with quaint touches; for instance this: "A woman is by nature fitted for homework, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing-up of children and the well-being of the family." In the decade of the 1890s, when socialist labor unions and political parties were on the march in Germany, France, and Britain, *Rerum novarum* was not exactly radical doctrine.

But by nineteenth-century Catholic standards the encyclical was a bombshell. The Catholic church had been a bulwark of social and political reaction throughout most of the century. As recently as 1864, little more than twenty-five years before *Rerum novarum,* Pope Pius IX, the immediate predecessor of Leo XIII, issued his notorious "Syllabus of Errors," which made it plain as noonday that the Roman pontiff would have no truck with modernism in general and liberalism in particular. Even Leo, when he was not being relatively progressive on the labor question, kept himself busy writing other encyclicals denouncing such evils as freemasonry and the separation of church and state.

So *Rerum novarum,* if it did not place the Catholic church at the forefront of social reform, at least signaled an end to the long era of dark reaction. It indicated the first stages of a willingness to come to terms with the modern world, a process that culminated seven decades later with Vatican II. Without question the encyclical was a watershed event in the history of the church.

In considering the relationship between the church and liberalism, we may divide liberalism into three periods: classical liberalism, progressive liberalism, and contemporary liberalism.

1. The essence of classical liberalism was expressed in the slogan, "That government is best which governs least." (Thomas Carlyle, no friend of this ideal, described it as "anarchy plus a constable.") The idea was that government should allow maximum liberty in all spheres of activity: freedom of trade, manufacture, religion, thought, speech, press, association, assembly, and so on.

2. Progressive liberalism, which began to flourish about a hundred years ago (about the time of *Rerum novarum*), faulted its predecessor for excessive individualism, for a failure to understand the quasi-organic nature of society, and for being unable to appreciate the radically social nature of individual conduct and individual person-

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ality. The practical conclusion drawn from these social-psychological premises was that government has the right and duty to intervene in the life of society, especially its economic and educational life, to a degree that would have outraged the classical liberals. (For an expression of this outrage, see the 1892 book, *The Man versus the State*, by Herbert Spencer, the last of the old-line liberals, who was convinced that the latter-day liberals were betraying the essence of liberalism.)

3. Contemporary liberalism, which came into its own in the late 1960s, splits the difference between the two earlier forms. In agreement with progressive liberalism, it allows extensive state intervention in the economic sphere; but it is more than a match for classical liberalism in telling the state to keep its nose out of a sphere of privacy in which are carried on a person's religious (or irreligious) and moral (or immoral) conduct. The central idea, best expressed in philosopher John Rawls's book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), is: (a) that there is no moral good we can all agree upon; (b) that everyone therefore ought to have as much freedom as possible to pursue his or her notion of the good; and (c) that equality ought to be maximized so that everyone, not just the more privileged faction of society, will have a fair chance of pursuing his or her private vision of the good.

The papacy's response to classical liberalism was almost totally negative. While this first stage of liberalism certainly offered much to be negative about, in particular its unbridled laissez-faire economics, it also had enormous merit, especially its recognition of the intimate link between liberty and human creativity—moral and intellectual creativity as well as industrial creativity. But Rome missed the point. In the 1832 encyclical *Mirari vos*, Pope Gregory XVI crushed the hopes of Lamennais and others who dreamed of a reconciliation between liberalism and Catholicism. In 1864 the "Syllabus" confirmed this in spades.

Rome was much better at accommodating progressive liberalism. At the very moment Herbert Spencer was denouncing the new doctrine with all the intransigence Pio Nono had used in denouncing the old, Leo XIII was embracing generous portions of progressive liberalism. The definitive philosophical reconciliation between Catholicism and the second-stage liberalism was worked out by Jacques Maritain, especially in his books *Integral Humanism* (1936) and *Man and the State* (1951).

It remains to be seen how Catholicism will respond to contemporary liberalism. It cannot simply endorse it, since the ethical agnosticism and subjectivism of present-day liberalism are radically incompatible with the Catholic notion that goodness and badness have a kind of objective reality. Just as Catholicism cannot endorse abortion, which follows in a logical way from the premises provided by moral subjectivism and relativism, so it cannot endorse the premises themselves. (Of course, great numbers of individual Catholics accept both the premises and the conclusions; but that's another story.) Nonetheless, contemporary liberalism has a profound, though perhaps one-sided, appreciation of the importance to morality of the subjective component—including individual free *choice*.

Maritain and John Courtney Murray provided materials that might be used in constructing a contemporary Catholic-liberal reconciliation. But both writers antedate contemporary liberalism; neither was able to address fully the central issues raised by Rawls or by the person-in-the-street who has elevated the right of privacy to a semi-divine status.

On a worldwide scale we are still in the era that opened with *Rerum novarum*, the era of progressive liberalism. But in the United States we have moved into a new age of liberalism. The question is: Will Catholicism, which made a relatively good adjustment to the progressive stage, be able to make a successful adjustment to the latest stage?

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

FROM LEO XIII TO JOHN PAUL II

THE EVOLUTION OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

On May 15, 1991, the universal church will celebrate the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, the first of the "social encyclicals." The observance in Rome will be marked by a new encyclical and a symposium of authors, teachers, and advocates from around the world. In the United States the National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a statement urging "parishes, dioceses, national organizations, educational and other institutions to use the opportunity to share our social teaching," and they designated the period from Ascension Thursday to Pentecost Sunday as a time for parishes to focus on the social dimensions of Catholic faith. The response to the papal and episcopal invitations has been extraordinary: Across the country Catholic institutions and organizations have planned a diverse menu of activities extending all through 1991 to observe the centenary.

The key issue, of course, is: What is being commemorated? The short answer is the encyclical tradition, the stream of papal and conciliar texts rooted in the spirit of *Rerum novarum* even as they develop far beyond its categories. The short answer is correct, but incomplete. The encyclical tradition is part of a wider social tradition dating not to 1891 but to the very origins of Christian Catholic faith. Morever, the encyclical tradition needs to be related to the wider social tradition if its full potential is to be realized. A broader response would distinguish three dimensions of the social

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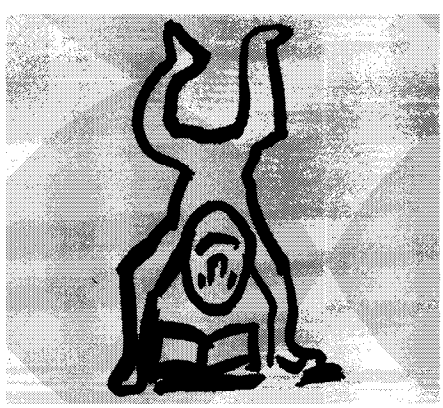
tradition: the church and the political order, the church and the socioeconomic order, and the church and the international order.

The political order is addressed in Catholic teaching on church and state. This extensive body of Catholic thought, in which Leo XIII also played a pivotal role, is not usually included in the social encyclical tradition. The relevant history runs from Leo XIII to Vatican II. Leo's role was crucial but less creative than his contribution to the social encyclical tradition. As John Courtney Murray demonstrated, Leo XIII's role was to put to rest the nineteenth-century teaching on the political order. This teaching—of Gregory XVI and Pius IX—rejected democracy, refused to accept a concept of religious freedom for others, and called for the acknowledgment of Catholicism as the religion of the state wherever possible.

Without rejecting any of these conclusions, Leo XIII recast the understanding of Catholicism and the political order, redefining the church-state question to focus on how church and state should cooperate for the good of the citizen. This new approach initiated a process which was advanced by Pius XII and culminated in John XXIII's *Pacem in terris* and Vatican II's *Dignitatis humanae*. By the end of the council, Catholic teaching had affirmed the validity and worth of democracy (Pius XII), affirmed the right of religious liberty, and transcended the idea of a Catholic state. In this story Leo XIII prepared the way for others who transformed the teaching.

In the area of the church, society, and the economy, Leo XIII was the architect of authentic development. Responding to the pastoral problems created by the industrial revolution, he drew heavily on Thomas Aquinas (not primarily on the Scriptures) to fashion a Christian response to issues of the meaning and worth of human labor, the proper role of the state in the economy, the right of working people to organize, and determination of a just wage. *Rerum novarum* was itself a major contribution to Catholic moral theology, but—more importantly—it set a precedent and a standard which Leo XIII's successors continued. It is a long way, historically and ethically, from Leo XIII's treatment of work in 1891 to John XXIII's description of socialization in *Mater et magistra*, from Leo's initial endorsement of workers' "associations" to John Paul II's support for Poland's Solidarity. But the more developed doctrine remains indebted to the surprising spirit and vision of an aristocratic pope steeped in scholastic philosophy who became the religious advocate for the working class of nineteenth-century Europe and America.

The encyclical tradition from 1891 through Pius XII's Pentecost address in 1941 remained focused on Leo XIII's concern: the nations undergoing the trauma of the industrial revolution. Beginning with Pius XII, however, a second stage of the tradition emerged: church teaching on the international order. As Leo XIII responded to the industrial revolution, so Pius XII grasped the change in "the Social Question" created by the effects of World War II. The emergence of a truly global international system took shape in the shadow of nuclear weapons and in the midst



of the cold war. From Pius XII to John Paul II the response of the social teaching has been to call for an adequate political order based on the moral foundation of the rights and duties of the person and of states to meet the demands of the national and international common good. Pius XII's teaching focused on the political-legal meaning of international order; John XXIII addressed political-military questions in the nuclear age; Paul VI's *Populorum progressio* concentrated on the economic dimensions of order. John Paul II, particularly in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, has been willing to join the normative themes of order with a more specific empirical critique of the geopolitics of states.

As we await the new encyclical of John Paul II, where does the need exist for growth and development in contemporary Catholic social teaching? On the church-state front, the conciliar teaching and its elaboration by John Paul II in terms of the right of religious freedom seems adequate as a framework of principles. The application in diverse situations is the task of each local church. The teaching on socioeconomic issues—the core of the social encyclical tradition—is in need of development at both the "macro" and the "micro" levels.

At the macro level, the encyclical tradition has developed as a critique of the two dominant socioeconomic philosophies of the twentieth century: liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism. The teaching always had its own positive content, but (after some initial ambiguity on the point) it did not try to present a "third way" as an alternative to the two systems. The virtual collapse of Marxism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe does not mean that socialist projects throughout the world will simply dissolve, but the old framework of the two systems is gone. The new encyclical will confront an international order where "the logic of the blocs," condemned in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, has been swept away, but the key to socioeconomic development remains elusive.

At the micro level, local churches throughout the world have developed their own emphasis on social teaching, notably in the theology of liberation, but not confined to that one school. How the universal teaching can learn from these insights from below is one of the open questions for the encyclical tradition.

Finally, at the level of international order, the papal theme for fifty years now, there is an open moment for these ideas. The end of the cold war, the enormous changes in both security issues and the direction of the global political economy have forced the empirical analysts of international relations to themes of order. But they seldom join moral and empirical issues. This is the opening for the future development of Catholic teaching. The moral bases, shaped over fifty years, are clear; how persuasively they can be joined to the kind of geopolitical assessment found in *Sollicitudo*, but updated to meet new questions since 1987, is the test for future Catholic international teaching. □

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A WEALTH OF NOTIONS

'RERUM NOVARUM' & ITS OFFSPRING IN AMERICA

MEL PIEHL

Challenged to defend an article of Roman Catholic teaching during his 1928 campaign for the presidency, Al Smith asked, it seems plaintively: "Would someone please tell me what the hell is an encyclical?" To the redoubtable Democratic governor of New York and graduate of the Fulton Fish Market, it came as news that there existed a special category of official but nondoctrinal Catholic pronouncements that he was supposed to know about. It was a typical lay American Catholic perspective.

Most things have changed dramatically in America and the Catholic church since 1928, and even more since the first papal social encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, was issued by Leo XIII on May 15, 1891. Yet it is still true that most American Catholics—not to mention non-Catholics—are only vaguely aware that there are papal encyclicals and bishops' pastoral letters containing "Catholic social teaching" about economics, labor relations, international development, and similar topics. One could probably spend a lifetime even in many Catholic circles and not come across much sustained discussion of *Rerum novarum*, *Laborem exercens*, *Economic Justice for All*, or any of the other landmarks of modern Catholic social teaching.

Despite this lack of popular awareness, however, the tradition of Catholic social teaching begun exactly a century ago by *Rerum novarum* has come to have a tremendous impact on the shape of American Catholicism, particularly as it has evolved in the quarter century since Vatican II. This is especially so if one includes under the rubric of "Catholic social thought" not only the official teachings by popes and bishops, but the whole range of unofficial social reflection and action undertaken by American Catholics. In the United States, these many unofficial versions of Catholic social thought and action have developed in a complex counterpoint with the officially sanctioned teachings—emphasizing, elaborating, challenging, and sometimes contradicting them.

As a result, it has come to be one of the distinctive strengths of the Catholic church in this country—plainly reflecting the American democratic heritage as well as the evolving official tradition—that American Catholicism has generated such an impressive diversity of voices giving social expression to Catholic Christian faith. And since history is made more by committed minorities than apathetic majorities, those Catholics who have taken their church's social teaching most seriously have had a disproportionate impact on their church and its role in the world.

The impact of Catholic social teaching on the rest of American society has been considerably more indirect. At least until Vatican II—and even sometimes since—even those few non-Catholic Americans who knew something about the teaching tended to view it as a narrow ecclesiastical affair or as somehow part of the Roman church's presumed ambitions for political influence in America. However, from the time of John XXIII's *Mater et magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in terris* (1963), and especially since the American bishops' pastoral *The Challenge of Peace* (1983), there has been a steady growth of respect for Catholic social thinking among American Protestant, Jewish, and secular elites. This hardly translates into public influence in a democratic country where elite opinion of any kind is almost automatically suspect. But something has happened when even the president of the

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United States feels compelled to invoke the traditional Roman Catholic just-war theory to conservative evangelical religious broadcasters.

A century ago, such a thing would have been almost unimaginable. When *Rerum novarum* was issued it made no splash with the American public, and stirred only a few small ripples among American Catholics. In Europe, Leo's encyclical was part of the long historic process by which Rome began trying to recover the "lost" working classes and extricate itself from the heavy mortgage to the ruling classes it had taken out before, during, and after the French Revolution. In America, however, the immigrant, working-class Catholic masses generally stayed deeply loyal to their church without benefit of any "social teaching." Furthermore, with few exceptions, the earliest American Catholic commentators on *Rerum novarum* focused almost exclusively on the encyclical's case against socialism, thus emphasizing the church's role as defender of a political prejudice that was hardly in jeopardy among Americans, Catholic or otherwise.

What most early commentators missed was the central feature that has made *Rerum novarum* the foundation of all subsequent papal social teaching: its derivation of crucial social values from the heart of Christian theology. Despite its scholastic categories and archaic attitudes, and the vast social and economic changes that a century has brought, the essential strength of *Rerum novarum* lies in its radical relativizing of earthly wealth, which it viewed not from the standpoint of economics but *sub specie aeternitatis*: "As for riches and other things that men call good and desirable, whether we have them in abundance or lack them altogether—so far as eternal happiness is concerned—it matters little; the important thing is to use them aright." Money and property may be privately owned, Leo contends, but they are, as it were, held in trust, and may not be used for private or selfish ends: "It is one thing to have a right to the possession of money," the encyclical asserts, "and another to have the right to use money as one wills." And most startling of all for the time, the pope proclaimed what might be called a "preferential option for the poor" rooted in divine will: "God himself seems to incline to those who suffer misfortune; for Jesus Christ calls the poor 'blessed'.... He displays the most tender charity toward the lowly and oppressed."

It is this essential Christian outlook on the whole of material existence, rather than the particular social prescriptions concerning government protection of wage earners, a living wage, restriction of working hours, and the like, that has made *Rerum novarum* the touchstone of the sustained tradition of papal social teaching that consists especially of Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* (1931); John XXIII's *Mater et magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in terris* (1963); Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* (1965); Paul VI's *Populorum progressio* (1967) and *Octogesima adveniens* (1971); and John Paul II's *Laborem exercens* (1981) and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987). This tradition, along with the wealth of secondary analysis it has generated, constitutes a uniquely coherent and valuable body of modern social thought that deserves to be at least as well known as the schools associated with Adam Smith, welfare-state liberalism, and Marxian and leftist social criticism.

At first, only a few creative clergy like John A. Ryan and William Kerby saw the relevance of *Rerum novarum* to American socioeconomic conditions, and began interpreting the seemingly obscure Roman teaching for American audiences—including Catholic bishops. Ryan, in particular, recognized that papal teaching cut not only against the grain of socialism, but against the laissez-faire capitalism that constituted the prevailing American economic faith. His efforts bore fruit when the bishops adopted as their own the *Program of Social Reconstruction* (1919) that he had written, and made him head of the social action department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (now the United States Catholic Conference) to implement it. (The bishops also showed just how American they had become by hiring a Madison Avenue advertising agency to publicize their statement.)

After flagging in the 1920s, an encyclical-inspired Catholic liberalism flowered again in the early 1930s, when most Catholics, including the bishops, supported the first phase of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. This support was reinforced by the widespread Catholic identification of FDR's National Recovery Administration (NRA) and other measures with the "vocational group system" advocated in Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* (1931). This rather dubious equation was encouraged by Roosevelt, Henry Wallace, and other Democratic politicians, and popularized for the Catholic public by Father Charles Coughlin, whose mellifluent radio addresses presented a distorted version of "Catholic social teaching" to millions of economically distressed listeners.

The Catholic alliance with the New Deal broke apart in the late 1930s over a variety of causes, but the legacy of Depression-era American social Catholicism has endured, especially in the close links between some socially conscious American Catholic leaders and segments of organized labor. The support for "workingmen's associations" in *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno* was in fact highly qualified and saturated with a nostalgic view of employee relations that suggested corporate paternalism rather than American-style unions. But no matter. American Catholic labor activists, clerical and lay, seized on the papal statements and made them central charters for their widespread labor schools and labor organizing. "The pope wants you to join a union" became the Catholic equivalent of secular organizers' appeal that "the president wants you to join a union." Although the special élan of the Catholic-labor connection faded after World War II, it has remained probably the most publicly significant institutional consequence of the American Catholic social tradition. Its legacy can be traced not only in the careers of many notable Catholic unionists, such as Philip Murray of the CIO, but in the public outlook of a number of Catholic politicians, including Robert Wagner, Sr., Eugene McCarthy, Edmund Brown, Sr., and now, perhaps, Mario Cuomo. (Granted, an even longer list of prominent American Catholic politicians who have been oblivious, or nearly so, to the "Catholic social tradition" also exists—and among the names on that list would be that of John F. Kennedy.)

Besides this narrow but important strain of principled American

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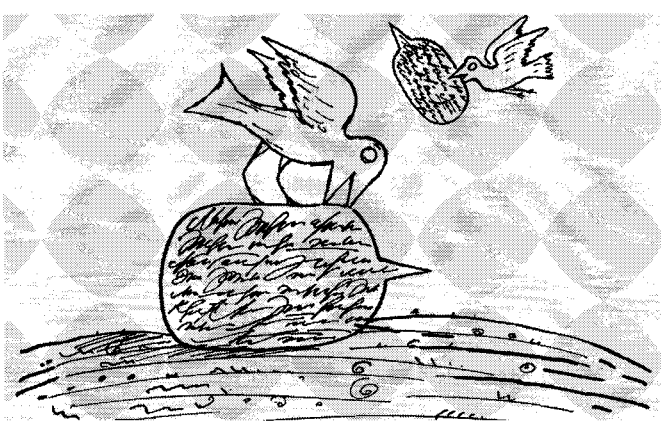
Catholic liberal-labor politics, there have been many other varieties of American social Catholicism that derived only indirectly from official statements of the popes or the American hierarchy. The small but deeply committed groups of American Catholics who became caught up in movements like the Grail, Friendship House, the Catholic Worker, or "specialized Catholic Action" in the 1930s and 1940s certainly thought of themselves as acting fully in accord with the popes and the bishops (anything else was unthinkable at the time). But in many cases these socially conscious American Catholics were more strongly influenced by various "personalist" social ideas derived from elements of the contemporary European Catholic intellectual revival, by theologies associated with the liturgical movement, or by the religious orders.

Still, until the 1960s, most forms of publicly visible Catholic social thought and action dealt essentially with the issues of economics, class relations, and labor relations discussed in the great papal social encyclicals. Indeed, for many Catholics the idea of "Catholic social teaching" has simply *meant* those topics addressed in *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*, to which have been added the somewhat different but related concerns for human rights, work, and international development presented in the encyclicals of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. In the United States, the official Catholic social tradition of Ryan and the bishops' social action department has been effectively carried on by notable advocates of labor and economic justice like Monsignor George Higgins. With its links to the labor movement and the liberal wing of the Democratic party, this tradition has continued to provide an effective external source of moral support for organized labor, and has sometimes spawned important new movements of social reform. For example, the visible support of many Catholic leaders for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers began a significant engagement with Hispanic-American social causes.

The tendency of much recent American Catholic social concern to move in directions not directly anticipated by the papal social tradition, however, is illustrated by the increasing prominence of issues like race and women's rights, about which the papal tradition is mostly silent or generally distant from American social conditions and ideas. Critical thought and engagement with these issues is rooted deeply in the American historical experience, including the experience of American Catholics.



But they have not traditionally loomed large on the Roman agenda of social concerns. Few of the centennial conferences celebrating *Rerum novarum*, one suspects, will dwell on its pronouncement that "paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the state, for it has the same source as human life itself. The child belongs to the father and is, as it were, the continuation of the father's personality...." Or, in a similar vein: "Women, again are not suited for certain occupations; a woman is fitted for homework, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family."

But the dearth of relevant official teaching on such subjects has not prevented some American Catholics from developing their own forms of social engagement. One can point to such remarkable phenomena as Daniel Rudd's black lay Catholic congresses of the 1880s and 1890s, or the numerous activities of Roman Catholic sisters on behalf of women in the nineteenth century. There were striking lay Catholic women's efforts, such as Mary Workman's Brownson House in Los Angeles, even in the early twentieth century. Abigail McCarthy's autobiography, *Private Faces, Public Places*, shows that some intellectually alert American Catholic women were engaged with a rich variety of communal, social-justice, and interracial concerns even during the era of the alleged Catholic ghetto.

In the last quarter century these issues have assumed an even more important place within the American Catholic social tradition. The diverse ways in which socially conscious American Catholics have addressed urgent issues of racial justice, women's rights, urban poverty, and the like seem quite remote from the formal reasoning and carefully modulated prescriptions of the papal social encyclicals. In the U.S., official Catholicism has increasingly tried to come to terms, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, with the broad range of social criticism and reform welling up from a substantial minority of its clergy and active laity. The real importance of Vatican II's social teaching, from the standpoint of its relation to American Catholicism, was not that *Gaudium et spes* added a few further twists to the tradition of *Rerum novarum*, but that its assertions concerning the importance of lay vocations in the world seemed to legitimize socially active American Catholics' do-it-yourself brand of social criticism. (Whether that was the intention of the council is, of course, another matter.)

Thus, many Catholics in recent years have expanded the American tradition of independent or quasi-official Christian social action that takes general inspiration from Catholic faith and seeks the support of churchly institutions where it can be found, but does not rely on official teachings or direct hierarchical support for its essential impetus. Social criticism of this sort goes on in many of the community organizations and activities spawned out of urban parishes, that have their roots in the older Catholic-related community activism of Ed Marciniak, Monsignor John Egan, and others. While little known to the general public and seldom very visible nationally, these efforts have often had a real if limited impact on local communities.

Also important in recent years have been various ecumenical forms of social thought and action. In many areas of social con-

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cern, American Catholics have long worked with Protestants and others on behalf of social causes. But in the last decade national ecumenical organizations like Bread for the World and Habitat for Humanity, as well as local efforts like Project Nehemiah (New York) and Bethel New Life (Chicago) that include Catholic participation, have assumed new vigor and importance in addressing issues like food-and-agriculture policy, low-cost housing, and the like. These efforts, however limited, stand out because the corporate system, the federal government, and the larger American public—including many Catholics—have retreated from general social concern amidst the generally status-quo political climate of the times. While many of these groups focus more on activism than on systematic thought about society as such, their experiences present the potential of developing more wide-ranging reflections on how American Christianity can assume a greater share of responsibility for the common good.

Seen against this backdrop of diverse, unofficial Catholic social thought and action, the more recent social encyclicals of John Paul II and the official statements of the American hierarchy assume a somewhat different significance. They have been extremely important as legitimations of concern and touchstones of debate among public policy elites, Catholic and non-Catholic. But they no longer constitute the sole form of American Catholic social teaching in the way that the pre-Vatican II encyclicals and statements did.

There is no question that the two most important social statements of the American Catholic hierarchy in the 1980s, *The Challenge of Peace* and *Economic Justice for All*, have brought unprecendented attention and prestige to Catholic social teaching in this country. The Reagan administration's revival of the cold war and its ideological return to laissez-faire economics created a public social climate that the American Catholic hierarchy, primarily because of the long Catholic social tradition it had inherited, was well prepared to address critically. At the same time, other religious voices that might have addressed a troubled American society had faltered. Most conservative evangelicals' social vision was very limited or focused on a few hot-button moral issues. Most mainline Protestant churches and the National Council of Churches deplored the prevailing trend of public policy, but their religious decline and tendency to engage primarily in "prophetic" denunciation left them severely weakened as contributors to wider debates.

By contrast with the often thinly documented and narrowly moralizing statements on social issues emerging from the National Council of Churches, *The Challenge of Peace*, *Economic Justice for All*, and other statements of the U.S. bishops have seemed models of judiciousness and careful reasoning. The bishops' adaptations of the "public hearing" model, initially in relation to the 1976 bicentennial Call to Action conference, and their submission of draft versions of their statements for public comment, have effectively combined American democratic openness and diversity with the Catholic tradition of a focused teaching authority.

This approach has also increasingly enabled the American bishops and their intellectually alert advisors to incorporate into these documents some perspectives from the more informal varieties of Catholic social engagement. So even if the bishops' particular policy recommendations have not been "implemented" in particular ways, and are not generally heeded by the majority of Catholics, *The Challenge of Peace* and *Economic Justice for All* have served the badly needed function of elevating American public discourse. They may even have worked in more subtle ways to shape policy. In my judgment, the strong insistence by Pentagon officials during the Persian Gulf War that they were avoiding civilian targets was in part, at least, a delayed response to the critique of civilian targeting set out in *The Challenge of Peace*. (Whether they in fact refrained from bombing military targets located amidst civilian populations is a different and at this point unknown matter.)

Despite its recently enhanced prestige, several dangers seem to attend the continuing enterprise of official Catholic social teaching. The first is simply verbal overload. Dozens of statements on numerous topics have poured forth from the Catholic church, with varying degrees of official status. In the 1970s alone, for instance, the U.S. Catholic Conference issued statements on prison reform, national health insurance, capital punishment, regulation of handguns, housing, television, strip mining, the elderly, American Indians, and welfare reform. While each of these statements may have some resonance with those directly concerned, one wonders whether even the dedicated readers of *Origins* are keeping up. In this sense, the non-Catholic public is probably better served than the church itself, because only the few highest-profile official statements have received widespread media attention. From the standpoint of general public credibility, this is probably a good thing.

The second question is how far church leaders should go in making explicit the relationship between Christian faith and social policy of all sorts. As some critics of the hierarchical social statements—most but not all of them conservative—have pointed out, it is difficult for those who are essentially pastors of the Christian church to strike a proper balance between expressions of broad moral concern about social questions and the detailed, sophisticated knowledge demanded of those leaders, many of them non-Christian, who actually seek to exercise responsibility in the public realm. The Catholic tradition has been to appeal to a "common good" accessible to all regardless of religious belief. But the movement from statements of highly abstract moral norms to social policy is fraught with difficulty.

The bishops (or those who research and write under their authority) are seemingly caught in a double bind. If they engage primarily in general moral assertions and policy recommendations, without elaborating comprehensive social theories and detailed analyses to justify their stands, they can be accused of naiveté and pious moralism. But if they try to incorporate more sophisticated analysis into their statements, they appear to be intruding into the terrain of secular public policy and undermining their distinctive religious calling.

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Of course, some of the criticism along these lines is itself ill-informed or grounded in an ideological bias that cannot withstand much scrutiny. This was certainly the case in *Toward the Future* (1984), the William Simon-Michael Novak "lay response" to the bishops' pastoral on the economy. As writers in *Commonweal* and elsewhere noted at the time, the Simon-Novak document was unable seriously to refute the venerable assertion of all Catholic social teaching since *Rerum novarum* that unregulated Friedmanesque capitalism—no matter how allegedly dynamic, "democratic," or benevolent—is incompatible with the social claims of the common good on economic life. And of course plenty of learned experts—Catholic and non-Catholic—could easily be found to argue for the value of state-regulated welfare capitalism or other economic practices opposed by Simon and Novak. The deeper issues at stake in various economic arrangements cannot in fact be decided on the basis of expertise, efficiency, or narrowly economist considerations, but depend (as the bishops said) on fundamental moral choices of social values.

Still, the question remains: Is it really desirable for either the Christian church or American public life to have some of its most visible spiritual leaders engaging in the same business as the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute? Would not the inevitable effect of such a tendency over the long run be to erode their distinctive religious authority and bring them into the public arena as simply another competing policy lobby—no matter how wise and morally valuable its prescriptions? This is what seems to have happened to the public social voice of most of mainstream liberal Protestantism, which is widely regarded, even by most people within its churches, as more a partisan lobby than the source of a distinctively spiritual perspective on our social lives.

To this outside observer, at least, this seems a real danger that socially concerned Catholics would be well advised to weigh. The alternative, it might be suggested, is not that there should be less Catholic social teaching or "softer" and more uncritical versions of Catholic social thought. Rather, the primary locus for such teaching in a mature Christian community should be among an increasing number of religiously committed lay leaders who can bring their knowledge of economics, business, race relations, gender, or politics, along with their strong Christian commitment and values, to public policy discussions. Too often, in all the churches, the idea of "listening to the lay person" on social matters has meant accommodating watered-down Christianity and banal popular prejudices. But there is no inherent reason why strong Christian commitment, sophisticated social thought, and a critical regard for American democratic values may not be found among lay religious people, whether Catholic, Protestant, or other.

Here, the parallel American Catholic tradition of non-official "Catholic social teaching" by a variety of explicitly Christian but nonauthoritative groups and movements—including both men's and women's religious orders and especially lay organizations—seems particularly suggestive as an additional way to bring valuable Christian perspectives to public life. If I understand

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them correctly, this is what many groups like the National Center for the Laity, the Catholic Worker, Bread for the World, Network, and many others have attempted to do. Of course, their very diversity (and often outright disagreement with one another), as well as their lack of official standing, means that such groups cannot attain the visibility and authority of official teaching in addressing broad issues of public policy. And such voluntary Catholic or ecumenical organizations and their "teaching" publications will inevitably be much smaller and more poorly funded than agencies run by the Catholic church itself. But American experience has taught us that authority of any kind is seriously eroded when it is misapplied beyond its proper scope, and most effective when confined to the central purposes that animate it. That is especially true, I think, of authority that rests its claims on spiritual ground.

As stated earlier, the real force of *Rerum novarum* and its offspring lies not in their particular prescriptions, useful as many of them are, but in their capacity to see our common public life, as secular social thought does not, in relation to the city of God. It is when it can genuinely illumine issues of worldly existence from that point of view, as the best official social teaching has done, that the church contributes most effectively to the common good of the society that it inhabits, as well as refreshing the wellsprings of its own inner life. □

MRS. GEORGE ORWELL

ANONYMOUS & ESSENTIAL

KATHARINE BYRNE

A rare impulse to throw things out came over me one snowbound Sunday afternoon last winter, and I wandered through rooms filled with accumulations, rummaging in drawers and clothes closets, thrusting the leftovers of my life into leaf-bags. I came upon a box of papers I had forgotten about—all the materials collected for the George Orwell class I taught: lecture notes, bibliographies, syllabuses, tests, monographs; photocopies of articles and reviews, a few of these my own. Orwell, "a quantifier," Mary McCarthy called him, might have observed that all of the above was stored in a 10-by-18-by-8 1/2 Pet Milk carton and weighed approximately twenty pounds.

Here he could be found, as much of him as was accessible to me, in bits and pieces about his life, his world, his writing. Fact, conjecture, argument, analysis, reputation. Who he was, where he went, what he said; and why it matters to critics right or left or allegedly unaligned. Almost everything thus gathered together was, understandably, about him.

At any given time, however, each of us projects his or her own experience on such an accumulation. I found myself looking at these papers in a new way, and for the first time wondering about *her*, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, Orwell's first wife, the woman who offered love and support through good times and bad times, the tests to which history subjected them, the trials to which he subjected himself and her, during the brief span of his great creative years. In this pile of paper and in the row of books on my Orwell shelf I wanted to find Eileen, the writer's wife, between the lines of his life.

Stansky and Abrahams, thoughtful and sympathetic biographers of George Orwell, observe that the writer's wife, unless she is herself a writer, exists only as she relates to him and usually ends up in literary history, if at all, simply as that shadowy figure, "his wife." (Note on that to authors S. and A.: Gentlemen: It is also true that the writer's husband, unless he is a writer, is simply "her husband." What, indeed, do we know about Charlotte Brontë's husband, except that he was her father's curate? And who was Mr. Edith Wharton? Mr. Agatha Christie? Mr. Harriet Beecher Stowe?)

Who, I wondered, was Eileen O'Shaughnessy, the woman described by her husband's friends as tall, thin, pretty, witty, and charming? (One of her friends adds these qualities to the list: sophisticated, fastidious, intelligent, and intellectual.) She was Anglo-Irish, a member of a warm and close-knit upper-middle-class family of middle-managers for the Empire. She had a scholarship to St. Hugh's College, Oxford, and was graduated with a "very good second" in English, not good enough, she thought, to encourage an academic career. Uncertain of purpose, she floundered through a variety of jobs, teaching in a girls' school, reading for a rich old lady, running a secretarial service. The only work for which she demonstrated continuing enthusiasm was the labor of love she performed for an admired older brother, a brilliant surgeon. She typed, edited, and prepared his papers for publication.

In 1935, however, she was enrolled and doing well in a graduate program at the University of London, moving toward a master's

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degree in psychology and a career as a child psychologist. It seemed that she had at last found something of her own in which to invest her intelligence and enthusiasm.

Then one evening at a party she met Eric Blair, who had by that time published a couple of novels under the name "George Orwell," neither of which she had even heard of. A good friend of Eileen's remembers Eric in shabby corduroys, dark plaid Viyella shirt and string tie, "draped at the fireplace and looking moth-eaten and prematurely aged." This was not Eileen's impression. She liked to hear what he had to say. He, in conversation with the hostess while cleaning up after the party, told her, "Eileen O'Shaughnessy is the girl I want to marry."

They did marry in the following year. Eileen seemed to acquiesce enthusiastically in his plans, as though she had none of her own. She dropped her studies and married a man already married to his calling. He was dedicated to his work; and she was thereafter dedicated to him. Although he had received encouraging reviews from perceptive critics, he described himself as a writer who could anticipate living "reasonably secure at a survival level." Eric had recently rented a three-hundred-year-old cottage in Wallington, a tiny village about forty miles from London. A previous and failing owner had converted the front room into a kind of village store. Orwell described it as, "practical and suited to my needs." No mention of hers. He added, "It is very rash, of course, but we have talked it over and decided I should never be economically justified in marrying, so we might as well be unjustified now as later." Eric's mother and sister did take the bride aside to warn her "about what she was getting into." She knew, apparently, but didn't mind.

The cottage's smoking fireplace and defective chimney made it a place cold at night even in June; mice scurried about on the plate rail; in winter the pipes froze, there was no electricity, and few places where Eric, six feet three inches tall, could stand upright without hitting his head on one of the ancient oak beams. Eileen willingly accommodated her life to his, wryly accepting his crochets and eccentricities. A friend who was a Jungian psychologist said of Eileen that "she caught his dreams and causes like the measles."

Elizabeth Fen, a sensitive and admiring friend of Eileen's, observes that classmates at the university marveled that this "emancipated and forceful woman should play second fiddle to the self-absorbed Blair." Fen also recalls that Eileen, when she was twenty-nine—and she points out that she was never sure whether her friend was joking or serious—said she would marry the first man who asked her now that she was nearing thirty.

There is no record of Eileen's seeking thereafter an own-life seriously. She did give psychological tests and encouragement to one little boy in the village. She did think about writing a children's book, involving farm animals which had human characteristics. She did miss being able to help her brother. Now she typed for her husband and answered the bell that announced a customer seeking entrance to the cottage-store: One of the villagers looking for a packet of aspirins or half-a-dozen eggs; perhaps a child wanting "a half-penny-worth of licorice all-sorts or mint humbugs."

Hardly were the garden planted, the chickens and goat properly housed, the groceries shelved, the penny-candy set out on the counter, when Eric was off to witness and experience the Spanish Civil War. They sold his share of the family silver to pay his way to Madrid. On his enlistment papers he wrote "grocer" in the space that asked for his occupation, but it was the "grocer's" wife who stayed home to wait on the customers. Eric wrote from the mud and cold of the Spanish trenches: "It is April and I wonder whether our wallflowers are in bloom."

Later, Eileen did join him in Spain, working as a secretary behind the lines in Madrid. On the dust jacket of Abrahams and Stansky's biography is a picture of a smiling wife among the members of her husband's ill-fated anarchist militia.

After that war, the couple returned to the Wallington cottage, he to write out his disillusionment at the betrayal of the cause he had fought for and suffered; and she to take care of his needs and worry about his deteriorating health. In Spain, a sniper's bullet had passed through his neck.

The injury to his throat was serious. Within a few months, Eric had to be hospitalized for a tubercular lesion that brought on hemorrhaging and required a six-month sanitarium stay. To reach his bedside required most of her day, on trains and a bus, with a long walk at the end of the line. She was remembered by other patients as a charming lady who inquired after their needs and brought wild flowers and home-made buns from the country.

The war in Spain, of course, proved to be only a preliminary exercise, a warm-up for the great conflagration that followed. The couple moved to London, she to work in the Ministry of Food, dreaming up recipes featuring turnips, and he to do short-wave broadcasts to India for the BBC. She worked long hours, running home at noon to see that he ate as well as their rations allowed, for she knew that when he was writing—and he was always writing—he would not take care of himself. A few years later he would recall that she often gave up her rations to others.

A friend of Eileen's, the novelist Lettice Cooper, in a book

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called *Black Bethlehem*, says of a character who is quite clearly related to Eileen, "she is always staying late to finish office work; she cooks and cleans for her brilliant and erratic husband and their friends; and is usually found washing up after midnight."

As the bombs fell on London, they lay in bed making up a story about farm animals which possessed all the virtues and vices of humans. Animals exploited and exploitive. How much does the perfect fable, *Animal Farm*, owe to Eileen's bright wit and humorous intelligence? The Orwells' friend, Tosco Fyvel, having heard the couple talk about the book, notes that this is the only work that Orwell is known to have discussed with his wife, and that it sparkles with her loving touches.

The death of Eileen's much loved brother in the British defeat at Dunkirk was a heavy blow to her. Of him she told a friend, "I always knew that if I called to him for help he would come to me, no matter where he might be." With Eric she knew, "his work would come first, before anyone or anything else."

Although his own course was relentless, Orwell was not totally selfish or unaware. He wrote to a friend at this time, "Eileen is working in a government department, but I want to get her out of it as they are simply working her to death, besides making it impossible for us to be together."

While certainly not merely the Angel of the House beloved of the Victorians, Eileen had inherited some of the qualities of the ministering angel, finding satisfaction in helping others. (A friend says that before her marriage, when she was doing thesis typing, Eileen had rewritten a client's entire master's essay.) She had taken the steps forward denied to a previous generation of women, but then she retired agreeably, apparently content to be "doing" for Eric.

And there was the baby. Eric had reason to believe that he was sterile, but he wanted them to have a child. They adopted a three-week-old boy, Eileen apparently not as keen for this move as Eric was, but she agreed to it. Although she was worn and exhausted from the pressure of her war work, and in failing health from an apparently unrecognized or unattended physical problem of her own, she accepted and loved this child, named Richard Horatio. And lugged him, the pram, the groceries, to the flat high above London. The top floor of a walk-up was not a place one would choose to live in during the blitz; one night the entire ceiling came down in a bombing raid. Like the country idyll of a piece of land with his own garden and goat, the idea of fatherhood appealed to Orwell. The day-by-day realities turned out to be his wife's responsibility.

As the war waned in Europe, the urge to experience the first days of peace, to test the political climate and the survivors' response to it, impelled Eric to leave England with an assignment as correspondent for the *Observer*. He did not hesitate to go off once more, as he had many times earlier: to Burma, to Paris, to Wigan Pier, to Spain. Because of his poor health he had been forced to work on the home front during World War II. Now he did not hesitate to go off again "adventuring," as his biographer, Bernard Crick, has it.

Orwell took off on his investigative assignment to the capitals of Western Europe in February 1945. He became seriously ill in Paris. Suffering from bronchitis, pneumonia, and lung hemorrhaging, he was forced to enter a hospital. At the same time, Eileen's failing health caught up with her apparent reluctance to admit that anything serious was wrong with her, or to undertake a necessary building-up of her resistance. She needed an operation described by her husband immediately afterward as "minor," but she died while the anesthetic was being administered. She was thirty-nine years old.

When he received the news of his wife's death, Orwell doped himself with M & B tablets (something used before penicillin was available), took a military plane, and arrived after her funeral. He found an unfinished letter still in her typewriter, begun on the morning of her operation. In this letter to him she talks about money. And her regret that the operation will cost so much; about "hating to use your money...what worries me is that I really don't think I'm worth the money." How to explain this burst of self-denigration? It is more understandable when one recalls that in those times, almost fifty years ago, there was no National Health assistance for proud, poor, middle-class persons and that the good brother who had facilitated Eric's hospitalization early in their marriage had died at Dunkirk.

Bernard Crick thinks that Eileen was anxious not to make her husband feel guilty, reasoning that she had discounted the seriousness of her condition because she wanted him to go abroad "peacefully" (her word), and not be worried about her. In a letter to a friend, written shortly before her death, Eileen said that she hadn't wanted to make too much of her failing health for fear that the judge with whom they were negotiating the adoption of the baby would think that she was unfit to be his mother.

In "Why I Write," Orwell points out that most people over the age of thirty live for others, but there are those few "...gifted, willful people who are determined to live their own lives to the end." He was one of them. The winter before he entered the hospital for the last time he lived on the bleak island of Jura where he wrote and rewrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the whole thing twice on an old manual typewriter. Young Richard, whom friends thought he should give up, was with him there, a loved child he was anxious to provide for.

There are now the if-only's. If only *Animal Farm* had not been turned down again and again because of the sensitive political problem it posed during the years of England's alliance with Russia, the hard-pressed couple would not have been so desperately worried about money. Although the book had developed out of their many conversations about those oppressed and oppressive participants in the barnyard revolution, it was not published until months after Eileen was dead. The politics of international relationships had shifted. The book was an immediate success.

Although a highly autobiographical writer, Orwell did not write about Eileen or talk about her to associates, during their marriage or after her death. Few knew about his wife. Their close friend Tosco Fyvel remembers her warmly: "I thought him lucky to have a wife who looked after him so well."

And Eileen? The pieces of her life available to me do not fit the classic pattern of female privation. We cannot say that societal

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givens and constraints denied her personal advancement. Carolyn Heilbrun, in her *Writing a Woman's Life*, talks about women who transform their need to be loved into a need to love, a penchant that tidily, housewifely serves their husbands. The evidence is that Eileen freely chose to give her life to another's needs.

A feminist reading of her life might insist that she had internalized, unfortunately, a totally self-abnegating, supportive role for herself. On the other hand, the sociologist Richard Sennett speaks of poor men's wives, who know how hard the world's demands are on the men they love, women whose willingness to play such a role is not to be denied, denigrated, or despised; she was one of them, wife of a working writer poor most of his life.

And what did she accomplish? She kept her husband alive, at great personal price, alive to do the work he was impelled to do, calling his countrymen back to some mythic past and warning them of some awful future, an extension of the evils he observed in the world he experienced. Eric's need, as she saw it, was for peace and quiet, fresh vegetables, hot tea, unquestioning encouragement to be off in whatever direction his demon sent him. If we cannot fully understand her motivation, we may appreciate it, and even applaud the generous spirit that guided her.

Early darkness closed down on the house by the time my searching and sifting were done. English 282 was in the trash bag tied up and propped against the kitchen door. All that was left was the little pile of notes and papers I had been looking for, allusions to the shadowy figure, the writer's wife. All of them fit into one legal-size envelope and grew into this essay. Why bother? I wanted to apologize to the woman I had failed to see in those years when I taught the Orwell course.

I am old enough to have undergone as a child the forced memorization of many pious and admonitory lines. As I put the bits and pieces about Eric's Eileen close to my word processor, there flashed across the screen of memory a Longfellow poem I was called upon to recite long ago, with its final cautionary lines, "Lives of all great men remind us...." There is also the possibility that

> Wives of some great men remind us—
> Those men whose lives are called sublime—
> "We are here if you can find us,
> Footnotes on the sands of time." □

BROKEN PIECES

IN THE FRACTIONING, WE ARE MADE WHOLE

DEBORAH SMITH DOUGLAS

The other afternoon I was sitting at my desk, typing an article I was late in finishing. The ribbon in my typewriter expired, and as I began the inky process of changing it, my nine-year-old daughter Katie called from her room: could I help her with her homework "for just a second?" I left the ribbon half-changed and had no more than bent over her notebook when the telephone rang. As I was on the phone in the kitchen, rescheduling an appointment, my six-year-old Emily wandered in and asked for a snack. I hung up the phone, sliced an apple, poured milk, found crackers, and realized I had forgotten to thaw anything for dinner. Staring into the refrigerator, improvising a menu for four from its uninspiring contents, I heard Katie call, reproachfully, "Mom! What about my homework?"

On the way out of the kitchen I wiped cracker crumbs off the counter, put milk on the shopping list, and made a note of the changed appointment time on the calendar. The calendar reminded me that a dozen books were overdue at the library, that the school rummage sale was this weekend, that I needed to arrange special transportation for Emily's dance class because Katie had an extra choir rehearsal on the same day, and that the deadline for the article I had only begun to type was now imminent. After I had untangled the knot of long division for Katie, I began again to change the ribbon in my typewriter when the phone rang again.

And so it goes. The life I have chosen makes demands that fracture and splinter the days. Like Prufrock, I measure out my life in coffeespoons. There is no unbroken moment. Even on good days, even the interruptions are interrupted. With Rilke I want to protest that "my life is not this steeply-sloping hour in which you see me hurrying"; but I am afraid that it is. Sometimes I am afraid that all my hours will steeply slope, that I will always be this hurried, this distracted. The burdens may be light, but they are many: like Gulliver, bound by the Lilliputians with innumerable fine threads, I am immobilized by small things.

I can respond to all the myriad small demands each day presents only if I never stop moving. I can hold chaos at bay only by breaking each moment into as many pieces as possible, hoping almost desperately that there will be enough to go around, that I can spread myself thin enough to cover it all. Sometimes it feels as though it is not only time and strength and order that

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are steadily eroded, but that somehow I am diminished; sometimes I feel myself disappearing.

How can I hope to achieve any of the serenity I crave, the wholeness I long for, in the midst of such tyrannous confusion?

I have begun to notice, in a rueful sort of way, how often Jesus in the Gospels seems as harried and distracted as a mother. He is forever trying to "get away to a quiet place" and is forever delayed and interrupted by the needs of other people, people he loves. Reading Matthew in the mornings lately, I am awed by Jesus' schedule, humbled by his patience and compassion.

I was particularly struck by the account (Matt. 14: 13-21) of Jesus feeding "the great throng" that had "followed him on foot from the towns." With only five loaves and two fishes (less than even my much raided refrigerator would yield on short notice), Jesus feeds a multitude. I have heard sermons on that text since I was a child. But what I realized recently for the first time was that by dividing, breaking up, and distributing that hastily gathered food, Jesus—so quietly, so casually—performed a miracle not of division but of multiplication. The gift of sustenance was not diminished but increased. Miracle indeed. Not a trick in my repertoire, alas: in my experience, division only divides; fragmenting only fractures. Entropy rules.

Perhaps it is the endless shopping-cooking-serving labor of feeding my family that so draws me to the stories of Jesus feeding people. Perhaps it is my own need to be fed by Jesus that so draws me to the Eucharist. A family meal is at the center of the sacrament—bread broken, wine poured out.

At any rate, it was at the Eucharist that an insight was given me that may help in my struggle against the entropic forces that regularly disintegrate my life.

As I watched, the priest cast a practiced eye over the congregation, and proceeded to break the consecrated wafer into a corresponding number of pieces. The perfect unblemished circle of the host was broken. First in half, then in half again, and then continuously divided, broken, fragmented, until it was reduced almost to crumbs. All that remained of its original integrity was a heap of fragments on the plate. "My life is like that," I realized.

I have long found a special grace in the orderly progression of the ritual that gathers us and feeds us and sends us out. The bread and the cup lifted, blessed, and offered for us—our hearts lifted, blessed, and offered to God—all this has profound significance for me. The moments of Consecration and Communion are usually especially powerful.

But all at once, in my fatigue, it was not the Communion—bread shared in joyful company—that spoke to my condition, but the fraction: bread broken; wholeness shattered; gift scattered. A feast diminished, reduced to crumbs that might be measured out in coffeespoons.

The difference, of course, between the fraction of the host and the fraction of my days, is the difference between Christ's feeding of the multitude (by a miraculous multiplication) and my own efforts (by laborious division) to nurture and hold together a family and a life.

When bread is broken in the sacrament, its strength is not diminished. I would never say that the tiny fragment of the host I receive in Communion is any less "profitable for my salvation" than the entire unbroken whole would be. In fact, in some mysterious way, by some gracious miracle of God, the strength is in the breaking and the breaking up.

I can see that the processes are similar: the wholeness of each God-given day reduced to a heap of broken moments; the wholeness of the host reduced to as many fragments as are required

Marilee Richards

The Grandmothers Clara and Madge

The grandmothers, caught between desire
and expectation, knowing they would never own
a nice dress until they were too old

to care, hitched up their skirts and bore down
on the kitchen table one more time,
each birth a new layer of drudgery:

inexplicable fevers and sores, another child
with measles or whooping cough to nurse
back from the brink, the pleasures

that cartwheeled too fast through their dreams.
Each spring the house colder than they remembered—
illnesses worse, endless sprints in the snow

to the outhouse and back, water that needed hauling,
kittens to be drowned. The last precious
chicken becoming dinner for unexpected company

as exhaustion swallowed every dream in sight.
Another start, although poorer somehow,
the wallpaper grimier, the planting and picking

wearing them down, the grandmothers prying
corn from the cobs, praying for the strength
to last through canning season, ravenous

for something other than food
as waists thickened and eyes went milky,
the store windows with their crystal,

their velvet, their tufted hats receding
to icy fragments of imagination
as distant as wedding china that broke

or never arrived. In the fields
the grandfathers hauled the sun on bare backs
caring only for rain, the chance in a million

for a decent crop this one time,
the slow earth that crumbled
like dough through their calloused hands.

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to feed the faithful. I can see that they are different—the weariness and discouragement at the end of my fragmented days; the strength and hope of wholeness that are given in the Eucharist. But I cannot see how to get there from here, how to bridge the gap between this disintegration and that integrity. No act of will, however Herculean, can transform my brokenness: no feat of time-management or jaw-clenched determination will ever turn my falling into rising, my mourning into dancing. Escalating my striving will not help.

Only grace provides in such abundance. Only love spreads such a feast. When, on that Galilean hillside, a multitude was fed with one child's picnic lunch, it was possible only because Jesus was there. In the sacrament, only the real presence of our Risen Lord makes it possible for us to "keep the feast." In my own life, in my long days of breaking time into ever-smaller fragments so there will be enough for every need, I can only hope for unity and peace if Christ is present. It is "in Christ"—perhaps only in Christ—that "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

The fractioning of my days is not likely to end any time soon. But perhaps—by a miracle of grace, by the grace of God—I can come to see myself not as meaninglessly disintegrated but as broken and given like bread, poured out like wine. Maybe God will so "enlighten the eyes of my heart" (Ephesians 1:18) that I will come to see that all my time—no matter how broken and scattered—is in God's hand (Psalm 31:15), a loving hand that also "takes up troubles and vexations" (Ps. 10:14) and "draws us out of many waters" (Ps. 18:16). There may even be such a miracle that I can come to see God present in the small moments as surely as I find grace offered in a crumb at the Lord's table.

I cannot do this alone, but God can do it in me. No iron-fisted act of will can help me, but an act of faith might accomplish much. "O Lord, I am unworthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be whole." I believe, with all my heart, that God longs to speak such a word, but that like the great lion Aslan in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, God "likes to be asked."

I suspect that silent prayer of aspiration, repeated throughout my hectic days, might in fact redeem the time—not that the breaking and the pouring out might end, but that they might be revealed to be sacramental; not so that my work will change to leisure, but that I might find God in the midst of it.

When bread is broken in the Eucharist, we do not rush to mend it. The celebrant does not attempt to fit the broken pieces back together again like Humpty Dumpty. The bread is meant to be broken, to be given and received, new each day, like manna in the wilderness. Perhaps each day, as well, is meant to be blessed and broken and given away. The broken pieces of my time, may be (as in the sacrament) evidence not of failure but of love.

"Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you, with gladness and singleness of heart, through Christ our Lord." This final petition of the liturgy may hold the key: my life, my time, perhaps my heart, will be broken again and again, into ever-smaller pieces. But even the broken pieces may have meaning, may give strength. By the grace of God, through Christ our Lord, "gladness and singleness of heart" can still be ours for the asking—and the giving. □

STAGE

DOWNSTAIRS, UPSTAIRS

'LOST IN YONKERS,' 'STEPS' & 'FRIENDS'

Some of the more enthusiastic admirers of Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* have suggested that he finally found his tragic figure in Grandma Kurnitz (I think he came closer with the drunken protagonist of *The Gingerbread Lady* back in 1970). His new play seems less a tragedy to me than a mishmash. Grandma Kurnitz is an icy martinet of a woman who has pretty much wrecked her children. Bella is functionally retarded, a grown-up child slavey to her mother, whatever she might prove on an externally administered examination. Gert is so upset in her mother's presence that she hyperventilates, fluting her sentences into hysterically altering vocal ranges. Eddie is the soft son, the wimp marked for failure. Louis is the tough son, who learned from his mother and became a minor gangster, on the run from the bosses he tries to cheat. In Grandma's big speech in the second act, we learn that she is a widow, a refugee, trapped in Yonkers and the candy store which she hates and which fed her family, and that the death of a beloved child taught her to wall herself off from all affection that might make her vulnerable to new pain. To understand everything may be to forgive everything (although I doubt it), but it certainly does not make for tragedy. Grandma Kurnitz comes closer to being a case study of a self-created victim and begetter of victims.

The action is very different from the situation as defined by the characters. Eddie, whose wife has recently died, leaves his sons with Grandma Kurnitz while he goes off on an extended business trip through the South (funny letters, voice over). The boys, standard clever stage kids, win the old woman's heart, and her harsh exterior becomes simply a mannerism that no one any longer takes seriously. Anyone who grew up on Shirley Temple movies can recognize the taming-of-the-curmudgeon plot, even though Simon wants to plant it in emotional and ethnic reality. As part of the general if minimal happy ending, Bella grows up enough to assert parity with her mother, Eddie proves a success after all, and Louis finds in the army the proper setting for his learned aggression (it is 1942). We do not see enough of Gert to know whether or not she gets her voice under control.

Mercedes Ruehl makes an effective and affecting moment out of Bella's speech about what her mother has done to her. For the most part, however, the comic bits—even when they are predictable and repetitive on the boys' part—work better for me than the touches of pathos, which are a shade too treacly, as though sugar had seeped upstairs from Kurnitz's Kandy Store on the first floor. Grandma Kurnitz is finally less interesting to me as a character than as a role that allowed Irene Worth, one of the most elegant actors on the American stage, to transform herself through makeup and through performance into an ugly, angry old woman.

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One of the commonplaces of casual criticism is to suggest or to deny that there are strong similarities between Neil Simon and Alan Ayckbourn. Benedict Nightingale was in the denial column recently (*New York Times*, February 10) in an article preceding the opening of two early Ayckbourn plays, *Taking Steps* (1979), which is still playing at the Circle in the Square, and *Absent Friends* (1974), which played the usual limited run at Manhattan Theatre Club. Both playwrights are phenomenally successful in their own countries and not much admired abroad, and their styles are certainly very different. What they have in common is a very black view of human possibilities and a desire to illustrate it in comfortable, comic surroundings. Not even the sentimental endings of Simon's recent autobiographical work can mask the sense of impending disaster that is more obvious in broadly comic works like *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*. It is customary to talk about how Ayckbourn's comedies have darkened in the last decade or so, but I cannot recall that the fun and games of the earlier ones grew out of any sanguine sense of human relationships.

Taking Steps is a farce about sex and real estate in which one woman decides not to leave her boring husband, another decides to run away from her even more boring fiancé (he puts himself to sleep when he talks), and the boring husband decides to buy a white elephant of a house none of them wants. The play is full of not very funny devices about the wrong persons being in the wrong beds and someone's being trapped in a closet and an offstage motorcycle that elicits verbal caresses of the word Yamaha. The main device, however, involves the kind of scenic trickery that Ayckbourn has used on other occasions. This time, the single set depicts three rooms, one atop another, the room identified in each case by particular articles of furniture; the characters share performance space but go unseen, however ludicrous their behavior, by the other characters, momentarily at rest, who are presumably on other floors.

In the preface to the published version of the play, Ayckbourn says, "unfortunately, it's possible to gain only an inkling of a play's merit from reading it. The real test occurs on a stage." This is clearly true of *Taking Steps*. Tristram, the young solicitor who is so shy that he is practically tongue-tied, is tedious on the page, but on stage, as played by Spike McClure, he is very funny. So too with the bores, who are simply boring on the page, but funnily boring in the flesh, and the stairway business is more amusing than one might expect from a visual tiptoe gag that is endlessly repeated. There is not much substance to *Taking Steps*, but none is intended. It is for fun or for nothing and, happily, it is often for fun.

There is more to *Absent Friends*. It is about a group of insufferable people who have been brought together by Diana, who is determined that they should console the even more insufferable Colin on the death of his fiancée. It turns out that they never much liked him when they were presumed to be his friends, they have not seen him for years, and he is so smugly comfortable in his memories of his beloved that her presumed perfections give him the excuse to diagnose them incorrectly and prescribe unlikely happy endings to their insurmountable problems—of which there are plenty. Much of the play is funny, in a flesh-crawling way, although Diana's husband is too much of a bully and the sluttish Evelyn, with whom he had it off (sort of) in the back seat of his car, is too involved in her own boredom to be comic—at least as they were played at MTC. Brenda Blethyn, on the other hand, gave a hilarious performance as Diana, even during the character's final breakdown at the end of the play, an intensely painful moment that was one laugh after another. The crowd of crocks above Kravitz's Kandy Store could have learned a trick or two about laughing angst from Diana and from Brenda Blethyn.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

SEX, DRUGS & ROCK 'N' ROLL

OLIVER STONE'S 'THE DOORS'

The Doors is pretty awful—certainly it's dull, and in large part obtuse, even silly. Still, it's well-meaning in its own confused way. Director and writer Oliver Stone previously has demonstrated great narrative strength and visceral power, if little intellectual imagination, in *Platoon* and *Wall Street*. But he is at a real loss in trying to sort out the truth—with a capital T—from the imbecilities in the life of Jim Morrison, the notorious rock star à la Dionysus. Morrison was a self-styled poet whose lush voice and sexual mystique made The Doors a wildly popular rock band in the late sixties. In telling this grim tale Stone seems to be aiming for the solemnity and mystery of a High Mass—no less than a re-presentation of Morrison's passion and sacrifice. We end up with only the tedium of empty ritual. Still, *The Doors* is essentially a religious narrative.

Morrison's band first flaunted its celebration of primitivism, anarchic sex, and promiscuous drug-taking in 1967 with "Light My Fire." They went on to release a handful of albums characterized by cryptic lyrics, dreamy rhythms, and an insistent organ line. Morrison had a romantic eschatological vision that combined megalomaniacal amoralism ("I can do anything," he wrote) with a pantheistic longing to merge with the universe. He merged in 1971 at twenty-seven, worn out by alcohol and drugs, thus joining a growing pantheon of rock musicians whose "creativity" was linked to fatal excess and whose purity of purpose was preserved by precocious death.

Stone reputedly conceived of *The Doors* as the final panel in a triptych about the sixties which includes his Vietnam war movies *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Platoon*. A Yale college dropout and Vietnam veteran, he has strong ideas about and an obvious identification with the period. Drugs, sexual experimentation, and the violent generational antagonisms surrounding the Vietnam war figure centrally in his work.

What Stone delivers, alas, is a pretty standard Hollywood rendition of wounded and self-destructive celebrity. Morrison

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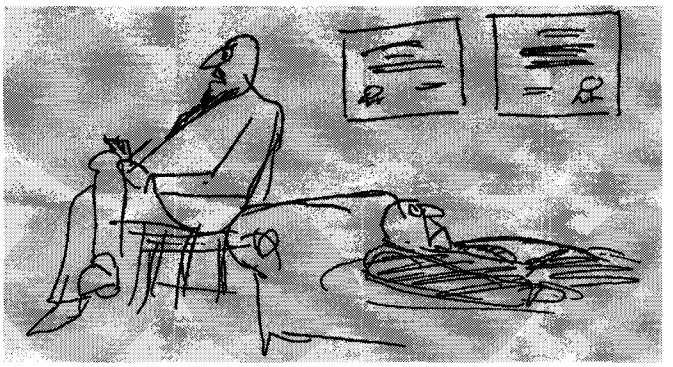
is a drunk who attracts adoring women, uncritical friends, and a perplexed but attentive media. But drunks and drug addicts are inevitably tedious subjects, especially if given to making oracular announcements on the meaning of life, the allure of death, and the fact that no one understands them. Morrison's pathetic artistic pretentions and sodden decline desperately need an ironic perspective. Stone, however, plays it straight, intent on capturing the texture more than the meaning of Morrison's life—hoping to give us myth and catharsis, not sense or sensibility. We end up with a lot of bloat and bad breath.

Val Kilmer has an uncanny resemblance to the fawn-like and pouting Morrison, and does a decent impersonation of the inarticulate musical guru. Stone is faithful to the facts of biography and his concern for verisimilitude is impressive, if not quaint. Beyond the dutiful reproduction of the paraphernalia and jargon of the period, *The Doors* boasts—literally—of the intermingling of Eros and Thanatos. Yes, Virginia, there are witches—and they drink blood.

Like Morrison, no one really escapes from *The Doors* alive, although Kathleen Quinlan deserves some sort of decoration for valor under fire in her role as a journalist who dabbles in witchcraft. That Quinlan's dark insinuations and occult hobbies seem more intensely real than almost anything else in this opera is one mark of the movie's unfocused character. As Morrison's long-suffering female companion, Meg Ryan (*When Harry Met Sally*) is as complacent and unblinking as Pat Nixon, and the band members, including Kyle MacLachlan of "Twin Peaks" fame, are all authentically soporific. Hey, man, it's cool. Certainly a highlight is the appearance of that old movie star William Kunstler as Morrison's defense attorney in an obscenity case. He plays himself. As usual, he's unbelievable.

Stone is at his most earnest but inert trying to explain the singer's charisma and the frenzied but evanescent devotion of his fans. *The Doors* has a lot of god-talk and a lot of vague ruminations about death and living on the edge—on a number of occasions, the edge is literally the window ledge of a hotel room high above the street. "Let's make the myths," a friend anoints Morrison. As his career careens toward oblivion, our muddled hero speculates on the secret of his appeal to the masses: "They're looking for something sacred." He fears his fans want his death, and in the final concert sequence, Stone photographs the doomed, half-naked singer as a Christ-like scapegoat about to die for the sins of his followers.

Certainly The Doors' concerts, with their invocations of rebellion and sexual liberation, their sacramental drug-taking and celebration of secret intuitive knowledge, were essentially cultish rituals. That is neither a startling nor an original insight. Once he sets up this analogy, however, Stone can't figure out what it might mean. In a stab at poetic profundity, Morrison's seductive presence is attributed to some mystical jibberish about the soul of a Native American shaman haunting his consciousness. This ghost appears from time to time, but what it signifies is as unclear as Morrison's drug-clouded gaze. At some level, we are led to believe, Morrison has tapped the deepest energies of the psyche and the universe. He combines this magical knowledge with a failure to bathe and the physical abuse of those closest to him.



"It's all in your mind."

Stone's presentation of Morrison as emblematic of the sixties has been met with a surprising defensiveness by some, who think the self-destructive singer was more an aberration than a barometer of the times. But Morrison's popularity was real, and the concatenations of rock music, drugs, and sex are hardly esoteric. Take a look at MTV. Sometimes a guitar is not merely a guitar. Sometimes a Madonna is not really a Madonna. You get the picture.

Though sympathetic to rock's enticements, Stone knows that its antinomian enthusiasms ("Hey, man, do your own thing") were never as benign as they sounded—certainly not when combined with the purposelessness of modern adolescence, a never-ending war, the false empowerment of drugs, and racial violence. Nor was it a coincidence that the social dislocations and sexual aimlessness of the time mirrored each other. Cultural values are not created in a social vacuum. As the anthropologist Mary Douglas has written, the emotional symbols of liberation adopted by anarchic figures like Morrison were an expression of the uprooted and anomalous social status of many young, especially university people. Such creeds have their origin in increasingly atomized, unorganized, and amorphous populations. The ritual celebration of ecstasy, dissociation, and anomie in music and drug-taking mirrors the unarticulated social condition of the participants. First comes the disintegrative family, the anonymous dormitories, the sense of economic and social superfluousness; then the existentialist attitudes.

American popular culture, whether it is subversive or mainstream, is forever stumbling upon "new" freedoms that have remarkably ancient pedigrees. The undifferentiating social and sexual doctrines Morrison and others espoused are a good example. You can go back to the fourteenth century and find the same rootless desperation disguised as emancipation, the same bohemian intelligentsia preaching social egalitarianism, sexual emancipation, and erotic mysticism. Indeed, Morrison's patented brand of erotic millenarism—where there is no sin or crime for the elect—is little different from that of the medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit, a heretical sect Norman Cohn wrote of in this vein in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. Like Morrison, the Brethren adopted boundless aims and premises, longing to "surpass the condition of humanity and become God." Like Morrison and other representative icons of the counterculture, the Brethren confused sex with intimacy and the absence of social obligation with freedom. Only the vocabulary had changed; the social geom-

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etry looks remarkably the same. What teen-agers, rock entrepreneurs, and college students proclaimed as moral and sexual wisdom had more to do with the social autonomy made possible by affluence, the suburbs, mobility, the pill, and an awkwardly prolonged adolescence than with any advance in the human spirit. Sometimes what we feel most intensely should be most suspect.

The hunger so evident in the sixties for meaningful connection to the world was real enough, but the remedy chosen was maddeningly self-defeating. In reacting to the impersonal forces controlling them, prophets like Morrison proposed what Douglas called a "revolution of feeling." As we know, that revolution quickly devolved into nihilistic excess. Even when electronically amplified, it sounds like a very old story.

PAUL BAUMANN

MEDIA

DIMMING OF THE PRIVATE EYE

FROM FR. BROWN TO FR. DOWLING

In 1981, I was teaching at Northwestern and had just finished a not-too-bad book on the science fiction of H.G. Wells. I was chatting in the faculty lounge with a colleague of mine—very distinguished guy, published in all the right journals—who asked me what I was going to write next.

"I'm going to try doing a detective novel," I told him.

"Ahh," he ahhed. "Are you going to publish it under your own name?"

I didn't—though I should have—answer, "No, under *yours*, you toad." But you get the point. The detective story, that hardiest and most apparently inexhaustible of popular forms, enjoys at best a demimondaine celebrity among the official guardians of our republic of letters. It's the kind of book an English professor will gladly—and condescendingly—admit to reading "to unwind": makes him seem a regular guy, you know? Sort of like George Bush telling us all he likes pork rinds. But for real? Forget it. When was the last time you saw a syllabus for "twentieth-century American literature" that included Dashiell Hammett *or* Raymond Chandler *or* Ross McDonald *or* James Crumley *or* Stuart Kaminsky? Never mind that, as *American* storytellers, any of those fellows make Saul Bellow and John Updike sound like puzzled anthropologists examining an unfamiliar culture and writing about it in a second language.

Science fiction—the other thriving popular form—has fared better. It's all about "ideas," you see, and it lends itself to all sorts of very modernist-looking narrative experiments (gosh—is a *computer* telling the story?). And those things are, of course, easier to jam about in a lecture than the challenging business of trying to explain why a story works.

I could tell you that any number of people, from W.H. Auden to my colleague and valued friend Thomas Steiner, have written eloquently about the detective story as a permanent model for *all* storytelling: after all, isn't the *ur*-form of all story the joke, and isn't the whole idea of telling or hearing a joke *waiting* for the point—for the punchline or for the revelation of the murderer? Or I could tell you that I decided I wanted to be a writer because I fell in love with my grandfather's Mickey Spillanes and Ellery Queens when I was thirteen (sure—the covers helped pique my interest), so that when I published my first novel at the age of forty it was less a "career change" than a homecoming. Or that—having just served on the Edgar (Mystery Writers of America) jury for Best First Novel of 1990—I can assure you that the average young mystery writer out there is at least as talented as the average young "mainstream" (whatever the hell *that* is) novelist.

But let's talk about television instead.

Now the Private Investigator, invented in 1877 by Arthur Conan Doyle, is a figure the modern age demanded: a private citizen defending the ideas of justice and order in a city that has grown too complex and corrupt, seemingly, to maintain them officially. A vigilante, perhaps: surely a self-appointed, maybe obsessed, representative of the way things ought to be in the midst of a society that has *forgotten* the way things ought to be. This general definition covers such detectives as Holmes in London, Chandler's Philip Marlowe in Los Angeles, or for that matter Batman in Gotham City (remember that Batman, unlike Superman, is *one of us*—i.e., one of the wounded). Also Hamlet and Oedipus.

Of course it's a myth. The crummy little men peeking in crummy little motels and the bureaucratized sleuths running down credit checks on their PC's are the reality, and always have been.

But we need, and we want, to believe there are individuals who *see* the wrongs of the system, and can somehow right—even in a tiny way—those wrongs. There should be "knights"—an image that pops up with amazing frequency in detective fiction—willing to be fools for the truth, bear witness for the right, even though the right may be temporarily obscured and marching to a hesitant drum. That is why, I think, Doyle invented Holmes the year *before* Jack the Ripper defined the modern city as the scene of absolute and unpredictable risk. It is also why the golden age of the private-eye story, in American literature and American film, is the late forties and fifties, the years in which we were trying to come to terms with our newfound and awesome international power *and*, at the same time, with our growing disease over the loss of those communal, charitable values that *entitled* us to wield such power. Maybe—and this is to our credit—no empire in history has experienced such profound anxiety at the very moment of its ascendancy. The brutal and flawed avenger, Mike Hammer, and the disoriented, self-loathing victim, Holden Caulfield, are almost congenital twins (*I, the Jury* in 1947; *The Catcher in the Rye* in 1953).

You see where I'm tending. I want to convince you that the detective story is one of the best—I'd say, the best—indices of how we, as a culture, imagine ourselves and imagine our ability to *make sense* of our contemporary, circumambient mess. And if I'm right about that, then the evolution of the private-eye story on television over the last twenty years has a lot to tell us about

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our ongoing national crisis of self-confidence.

The seventies and early eighties were the heyday of the private eye on the Tube. Just as in the forties, we had come through a distressing time that we had, somehow, survived (Vietnam, Watergate), and were anxious to consolidate and understand our survival: was there still an America, and did it still make sense? By that time the Tube had displaced the book and the big screen as the cutting edge of national mythmaking, and the detectives it gave us were, on the whole, resonant projections of a kind of national longing for populist nobility. David Janssen's "Harry O." (who gave his first name to my private eye, if you're interested), Peter Falk's "Columbo" (yeah, he was a cop—but not really, right?), James Garner's "Rockford Files," and Tom Selleck's "Magnum P.I." all asserted, and most often brilliantly, that we were still a nation of passionate outsiders who could, push come to shove, step in and make a difference.

And then came the Reagan/Bush years, and the triumph of the technocrat, the sanctification of corporate greed, and the disengagement of government from the business of life. And the private eye went over the rainbow. The most popular mystery series of the last few years are "Murder, She Wrote" and the "Father Dowling Mysteries." One stars the wonderful Angela Lansbury, the other the greatly gifted Tom Bosley. Both are virtually unwatchable, and both are, I think, highly significant. Because in both the detective, the essential, central, and mythic *figure* of the detective, is subtly denatured.

Lansbury's Jessica is a dotty mystery *writer* who gets involved, willy-nilly and week after week, in real-life crimes against her will. Bosley's Fr. Dowling is a dotty/cute priest who etc., etc. This first is obviously a clone of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, and the second of Chesterton's Father Brown.

But Miss Marple and Father Brown were serious—as the detective story tradition is fundamentally serious. Jessica and Dowling, as presented on the Tube, are merely lucky dabblers: amateurs whose real business lies elsewhere, and for whom the possibility of making a difference is subordinate to the business of preserving the order of things. They are detectives, that is, who almost subvert the strong moral and democratic bias of the detective story itself.

Almost, but not quite. We may be in the midst of the age of the establishment triumphant—certainly the present administration would like us to be—but as long as the inherently disruptive myth of the private eye survives at all, it continues to resist the fate of total domestication.

FRANK McCONNELL

BOOKS

Up the creek without a compass

THE AGE OF DIMINISHED EXPECTATIONS
U.S. Economic Policy in the 1990s
Paul Krugman
M.I. T. Press, $17.95, 204 pp.

John Feffer

Jimmy Carter's declaration of an "age of limits" at the beginning of his presidential term was a dose of political realism that, for all its empirical validity, did nothing to further his political career. Branded a dreary pessimist, a Southern nabob of negativism, Carter was incapable of convincing the American public that the U.S. could no longer perform unilaterally in the economic, political, and military spheres as it had once done during the heyday of the "American century." Then, in 1981, Ronald Reagan unveiled morning in America. Obscurantism had momentarily vanquished realism.

Reagan's optimism has subsequently proven to be little more than a historic blip. The beginning of the 1990s have confirmed the drift of American policy: the savings and loan fiasco, the woefully expensive and questionably ethical war in the Persian Gulf, another recession, a ballooning budget deficit, political stagnation, endemic crime and urban blight, in short a decline in national health facilitated in all respects by hypertrophied military muscle. Morning in America had become morning sickness. Skillfully monitoring the vital signs, the Cassandras of the latter half of the 1980s had produced several sober, and sobering, reflections on the downward trajectory of American empire. Paul Kennedy (*The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*) and Walter Russell Mead (*Mortal Splendor*) began the rollback of optimism. Economist Paul Krugman has brought that analysis into the 1990s, translated into dollars and cents.

Krugman's *The Age of Diminished Expectations* derives its impact as much from the clarity of its content as from the stature of its author. The *wunderkind* of M.I.T., Krugman is known for his arcane analyses of trade policies and his work with President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors. He is not, in other words, the type to write a doomsday book. Of course, Krugman remains true to his profession, preferring an understated style and balanced presentations to irresponsible predictions. Though he suspects that the U.S. will most likely muddle through into the near future, he rates the chances of the bottom dropping out the economy at one in four. Not very reassuring after a decade of cowboy swagger.

Krugman's argument is simple. After a postwar period of unprecedented growth, the American economy settled in the 1970s into what seems to be chronic stagnation. The gap between rich and poor has

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widened, productivity has leveled out, inflation continues to infect our economy despite tight monetary policies, and huge deficits have opened up in the current trade accounts and government budget. Americans, Krugman argues, have come to treat this hobbled economy as acceptable, even normal.

Krugman doesn't offer an array of solutions. He is more interested in showing the complexity of problems, the built-in give-and-takes, the economic Gordian knots pulled all the tighter by political considerations. Along the way, he tackles some popular myths—the U.S. trade deficit is related to the rate of domestic savings not high tariffs abroad, bringing down inflation necessarily means accepting recession and higher unemployment, lowering the value of the dollar would have beneficial effects on U.S. trade. He even offers one or two unorthodox suggestions, for instance pointing out that a solution to the third-world debt problem could cost roughly one-twentieth of the S&L bailout (the trick is to look not at the actual amount of the aggregate debt but at its price on secondary markets).

The best aspect of *The Age of Diminished Expectations* is its accessibility. Krugman has the laudable ability, rare among economists, to condense pages of complex argumentation into one or two clear paragraphs (an act of rhetorical agility as useful to the layperson as it is probably infuriating to the expert). Krugman brings economics, which is after all a *social* science, from the level of number-crunching impenetrability down into the public domain. Mathematical economics, as Robert Heilbroner once pointed out, combines "rigor" with "mortis"; the airport bookstand variety is simultaneously digestible and disposable; the newspapers favor graphs and deceptively transparent description. Krugman, by contrast, has produced an economic primer, short and laconic in style, a book that an interested non-expert needs close by to check for the umpteenth time the relationship between a falling dollar and a trade deficit.

Despite all these merits, the book does have substantial blind spots. At many points, Krugman deliberately refrains from providing definitive conclusions. Should the government drive the dollar down? Should the government aim for greater employment? There are pros and cons and Krugman presents both sides. Yet despite adherence to traditional "value-free" economics and a desire to describe rather than prescribe, he cannot maintain distance: his opinions invariably bleed through. "American interests," Krugman writes at one point, "would probably best be served by a world of free trade, with the temptations of strategic trade policy kept out of reach by international treaty." Thus, free trade is championed for national as well as economic reasons (so much for "pure" cost-benefit analyses and policies based exclusively on efficiency and rationality).

Were it simply a matter of throw-away lines such as the one above and were he honest about his ideology like liberal Robert Lekachman or conservative Milton Friedman, Krugman's perspective would be tolerable (or at least assessable). Instead, his views covertly permeate his analysis, particularly at those times when he attempts to be most even-handed.

In a chapter on corporate finance, for instance, Krugman discusses two current explanations for the enormous growth in profits made in the field in the 1980s. One school maintains that the profits derive from the increased productivity of a replaced or reordered management after a corporate take-over. The other school suggests that the profits come from the pockets of workers forced to accept wage cuts or dismissed outright after one of the many industrial restructurings of the decade. Following liberal tradition, Krugman

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REVIEWERS

JOHN FEFFER *has written on foreign policy issues for a number of journals. He is the author of* Beyond Detente: Foreign Policy and U.S. Options *(Hill & Wang). His most recent contribution to* Commonweal *was "Eastern Europe's Troubled Transition," February 8, 1991.*

JAMES NEAFSEY *teaches in the Diaconate Formation Program for the Diocese of Oakland, California.*

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *writes the religious booknotes for this journal and teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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decides that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. But based on the evidence he himself presents in the book, the profits gained through improved productivity could not possibly compare to the profits earned through labor givebacks: the difference is of several orders of magnitude. Throw in the profits from government kickbacks, favorable tax policy, and outright criminality and the windfall earnings of the 1980s become even more suspect. Giving credence to the efficiency school allows Krugman to hide behind "normal" economic explanations instead of examining more closely the grossly inequitable aspects of corporate finance that permitted the spending spree of 1980s, a tab picked up thank-you-very-much by taxpayers now and for many decades into the future.

Irritating lapses aside, *The Age of Diminished Expectations* remains a helpful guide to today's economic conundrums and a necessary tonic for any residual Reagan optimism that appears, as one or more points of light, in the current presidency. We will, as Krugman suggests, be drifting for quite a while. Should the stretch of stagnation before eventual *perestroika* be a long one, we may as well read our Cassandras, heed their warnings, become informed and incensed, and be that much better prepared for the time when our leaders once again accept or are forced to accept the inevitability of an age of limits. □

REAL QUICHE

IRON JOHN:
A Book about Men
Robert Bly
Addison-Wesley, $18.95, 268 pp.

James Neafsey

In *Iron John: A Book about Men* Robert Bly explores male initiation, not as a cultural practice in some distant time or place, but as a pressing need for contemporary American men. In Bly's view, the state of the American male is a disaster. American men have lost connection to their emotional bodies, their distinctive mode of feeling. In preindustrial cultures young men were guided from boyhood to manhood through initiation rituals, stories, and a kind of "cellular attunement" to male energies that took place during long hours of living and working in the physical presence of older men. The Industrial Revolution, in its need for office and factory workers, disrupted this pattern and separated sons from their fathers. Most fathers today have no work to share with their sons and cannot really explain to them what they are doing. The road maps to male maturity contained in ancient stories, rituals, and poetry have largely been forgotten.

For ten years now Bly has been addressing such issues in gatherings of men, most in midlife or beyond, who share his sense that something is askew in the soul of the American male. Typically such events include storytelling, poetry, drumming, dancing, and a deep sharing of feeling and personal stories among participants. Bly was astounded at the amount of grief and anguish that surfaced at these gatherings. These men reinforced his conviction that the images of adult manhood offered by popular culture are worn out, and that a growing number of men are open to new visions of what a man is or could be.

Bly looks to the very old images contained in myths and fairy tales to ground his new vision. His book is structured around the tale "Iron John" (or "Iron Hans") recorded by the Brothers Grimm in the last century, but rooted in ancient pre-Christian motifs. Iron John, a wild man covered with hair, is brought up from the depths of a forest pond and imprisoned in a cage in the king's courtyard. Iron John eventually convinces the king's son to steal the key to the cage from under his mother's pillow and release him. The boy, fearful of punishment, flees with Iron John into the forest. The wild man becomes a mentor to the boy, initiating him into successive stages of manhood. These stages are represented by archetypal figures and situations such as working among the ashes, meeting the sun king, bringing wild flowers to the king's daughter, becoming a warrior, and marrying the royal bride.

Bly makes it clear that the figure of the "wild man" is not a celebration of the brutal, macho, irresponsible male. His choice of this image does not represent a reaction to feminism or an attempt to bring back male domination. The wild man is rather an image for the instinctive, spontaneous, vigorous energy within men that is capable of fierce resolve and life-giving action. The wild man encourages a trust of the lower half of the body, the place of sexuality and contact with the earth. The awakening of the wild man restores a kinship with and care for the wildness in nature.

In his commentary on the story, Bly weaves in research from the social sciences, literature, and comparative mythology, as well as personal testimony, anecdotes of contemporary men, and poetry—including his own. The style is direct, free flowing, witty, and passionate. It is not a book aimed at the academic establishment. Nor is it a popular self-help book for men. Bly is speaking to men in search of soul. His intent is to help men develop a deeper emotional capacity for grief, ecstasy, and spirit, to find language and images for their desires. There is a low, resonating string in a man's heart, he writes, "that makes his whole chest tremble when the qualities of the masculine are spoken of in the right way." Bly's purpose is to set that string vibrating by expressing the richness and complexity of male experience with authenticity and power. His skill as a poet is evident throughout.

Iron John is more than "a book about men." Theologians and pastoral ministers, for example, might find in it a model of how to retrieve an ancient story and allow it to speak to a wide range of contemporary concerns. Some may find his approach too eclectic, too wild, to be of any use for serious theology. But without a bit of wildness, "theology," in the words of Lawrence Durrell, "is very old ice cream, very tame sausage." □

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SOMETHING LEFT OUT

MODERN CATHOLICISM
Vatican II and After
Edited by Adrian Hastings
Oxford University Press, $29.95, 544 pages

Lawrence S. Cunningham

We are now a quarter of a century away from the Second Vatican Council; an event which was, it might be safely said, a watershed in the long history of Catholicism. Its very importance has spawned enough literature to sink a fair-sized ship and enough comment to stagger even the most dedicated student of its significance. Precisely because it was both important and is now becoming history (all the students I teach were born into the postconciliar church), it is useful to sum up where we have come from and where we are in relationship to that council even if many of us have lived through those changes and think we understand them.

Adrian Hastings, an English academic, has put together a hefty collection of essays, composed by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, to (1) recall the events leading up to the council; (2) describe once again the thrust of all of the conciliar debates and the documents that emerged from those debates; and (3) survey the state of the church in various parts of the world as a result of those conciliar sea-changes.

The very scope of what this volume attempts limits its thoroughness as does its desire to provide both narrative history and theological analysis. The very handy section on the conciliar documents themselves, for example, many of them written by recognized authorities (Robert Taft, S.J., on the Eastern church; Aylward Shorter on the missions; Richard McBrien on ecclesiology; etc.), are of such brevity that they cannot reach the level of theological sophistication found, say, in Alberigo's *The Reception of Vatican II* (1987) with its suggestive pages on conciliar hermeneutics and its nuanced sense of Reception Theory as applied to the council. The essays in Hastings's collection are, of necessity, more descriptive than analytical.

Other areas of the book concern themselves with what I like to call "The Higher Chit-Chat": what pope x thought of theologian y; what bishop tried to head off which curial members; and so on. The section on "Aspects of the Church after the Council" is, by turns, banal and informative. Spirituality gets no essay and the one headed "devotion" is thin beer indeed with its preoccupation with such epiphenomena as Matthew Fox and the Madonna in Yugoslavia. The Jesuits get a separate essay but there is none on the collapse of women's religious orders in the West which would have made a stunning companion piece to the parlous statistics recorded in the essay on the state of the priesthood.

The somewhat gossipy spirit of much of this book (one senses the presence of Peter Hebblethwaite everywhere in it) is, paradoxically, the source of much of its strength and much of its weakness. This is an *interesting* volume which is both readable, informative, and yet—and yet—unsatisfying. In the section devoted to the different regions of the Catholic world we find Enrique Dussel citing the Sandinista Revolution of 1979 as emblematic of the prophetic spirit of the council (!) but not a word about the increasing strength of evangelical/fundamentalist Christianity in Latin America. By contrast, the essay on India and Sri Lanka is almost a textbook description of how difficult the problem of inculturation can be when Western assumptions, say, about liturgy are modified through the impact of another culture. The fullness of that essay contrasts sharply with the relatively few pages devoted to the vibrant (but problem-filled) church in Africa. The entry on North America is, in actuality, about the United States with nary a word about Canada in general or Francophone Canada in particular. The longish essay on Great Britain and Ireland, not surprisingly, is a full chronicle of the attempts of a very conservative church to come to grips with the council.

What I have noted above are only a sampling of essays among the sixty-two that make up this anthology. Some of the individual pieces are informative enough (and some are very good) but on the whole I found this a rather quick and bewildering view of that complex reality known as the postconciliar Catholic world. *Modern Catholicism* represents a fine idea very imperfectly realized, which may well be a direct result of its overly ambitious intentions. □

IN BRIEF

ABORTION, *edited by Janet Podell, H.W. Wilson Co., New York, $13, 231 pp.*

Whatever opinion you may hold on the abortion question, you are likely to find it ably defended and ably challenged in this book. Like others in a series called "The Reference Shelf" issued by the same publisher, it is a compilation of articles, interviews, transcribed debates, and book excerpts, all dealing from one perspective or another with one aspect or another of the abortion debate. The twenty-four selections are grouped in five sections: "The Right to Choose," "The Right to Live," "If Abortion Were Illegal," "Ethical Debates," and "Approaches to Compromise." A bibliography uses the same categories to group thirty-five books and pamphlets and thirty-one abstracts of additional articles from periodicals.

The editor's selections are fair and judicious; so also her introductory comments on each of the sections (though some readers may be offended that she uses "proabortion" and "antiabortion" rather than "prochoice" and "prolife," and "developing baby" rather than "fetus").

Two of the selections are reprinted from *Commonweal* (one by Sidney Callahan, the other by Daniel Degnan, S.J.). Two other articles from these pages (by David Carlin, Jr., and Daniel Maguire) are abstracted in the bibliography, and other current or former *Commonweal* contributors (Mary Ann Glendon, Daniel Callahan, Jo McGowan, John Leo, and Cardinal Joseph Bernardin)

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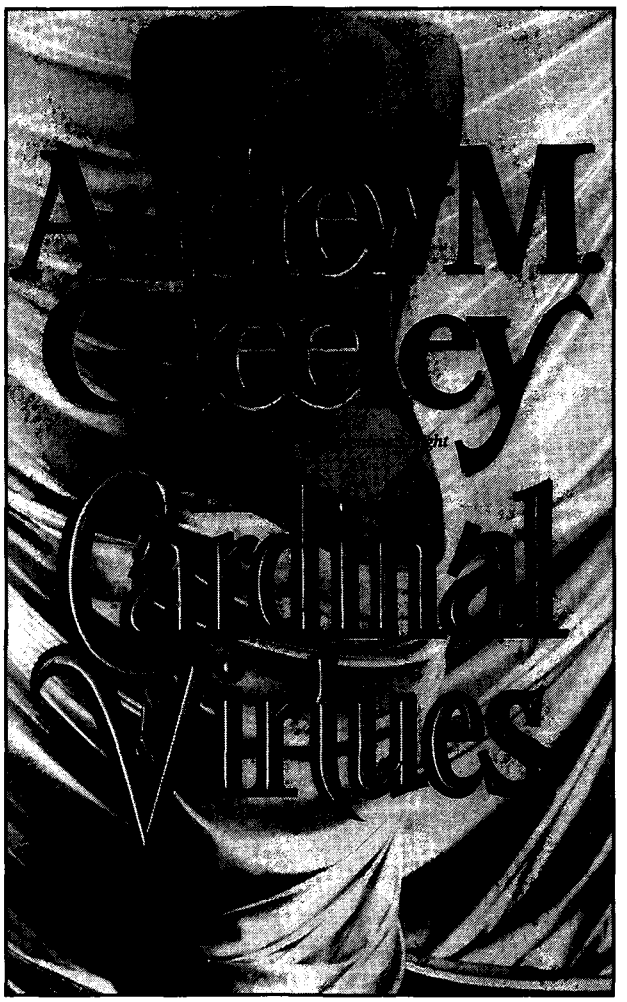

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*Naome Lewis, Fiction Editor of *Good Housekeeping*

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are also represented in one way or another.

Most (not all) of these writers question the morality of abortion and/or the constitutionality of *Roe* v. *Wade*. Of those who defend "choice" and the Court, Gloria Steinem is the best known, but that general position is well articulated by many other contributors. For this reviewer, perhaps the most interesting single article was "Beyond the Legal Right," by Jason DeParle, reprinted from *The Washington Monthly*. A defender of the legality of abortion, DeParle sifts skeptically through standard liberal and leftist rhetoric promoting "choice"; he also reports interviews with writers prominent in its defense, gently and without malice bringing out inconsistencies in their positions. Though I have not seen the rebuttals that may have appeared, the piece seems to me most thought-provoking. So also the whole volume. A necessary job, well done. R.G.H.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 274)

related topic imaginable; for instance, "Open Adoption Versus Traditional Adoption," which we can send her free. We can also send free listings from our *National Crisis Pregnancy Centers Directory* and from our *National Adoption Directory* for up to five states. These lists include Birth Parent Support Groups, too. Moreover, if perchance one of the students in the research project described in the article had called us, he/she would have been given the names of four crisis pregnancy centers in Jamaica, N.Y., all of them Catholic.

As for the article's suggestion #4 on demanding at least proportionate funding for birth assistance as is now available for abortion, Congress established this Clearinghouse (in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986) to be a possible alternative to abortion, as one of its reasons for being. The services of the Clearinghouse have been available to the public since April 1, 1988; I know, because I've worked here from the start.

THERESA K. TAYLOR

The writer is librarian of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse.

What might have been

Livonia, Mich.

To the Editors: In response to the editorial "Good enough for us" [March 22], commenting on Archbishop Rembert Weakland's pastoral letter, it may be of interest to take note of an interview with Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of Sao Paulo, Brazil, a Franciscan, which appeared in the Italian Catholic magazine *Il Regno*. A summary appeared in the Milwaukee *Catholic Herald*, the newspaper of Archbishop Weakland's own archdiocese.

The cardinal said that Pope Paul VI was ready to allow married priests in the Latin Rite had the change been approved by the 1971 World Synod of Bishops. "It was a shame that the majority of bishops, above all Europeans, voted against it," Cardinal Arns said.

Was the *Herald* the only Catholic publication in the U.S. that took note of the interview? I have not seen any reference to it in the secular press.

BASIL E. JANASKIK, O.F.M.

Caveat lector

Aloha, Oreg.

To the Editors: The advertisement on the back cover of the March 22 issue disturbed us, to put our revulsion in the most charitable terms. Whoever the folks at the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel are, they are certainly not informed.

The signers see "promise" in the increasing immigration of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews into Palestine/Israel. One wonders just what "promise" they see. The promise of more land being stolen from Palestinians? The promise of even greater disparity in the distribution of the region's meager water resources, a disparity which restricts a Palestinian to forty-five gallons each day while giving seventy-two gallons to an Israeli citizen? The promise of a continuing increase in the *out*migration of indigenous Christians from the Holy Land?

More questions. Where is Israel's claimed commitment to the peace process? Can we see it in the continuing deportations of Palestinians from their own homeland, without trial? In the arbitrary curfews and school closings imposed on Palestinian towns? In the continuing settlements of Israeli citizens on land stolen from the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza? Along with the residents of Palestine at the time of Jesus, we look for signs.

As for "efforts by outside powers to impose a solution," we assume that the authors fail to see that billions of U.S. foreign aid dollars have indeed imposed a "solution"—but only on the Palestinians, who are approaching the twenty-fourth anniversary of military occupation by Israel, nearly a quarter century of rule by military decree which has increased in brutality with each passing year. We vote to impede that kind of progress.

Frankly, we'd prefer cigarette advertisements. They come with warning labels.

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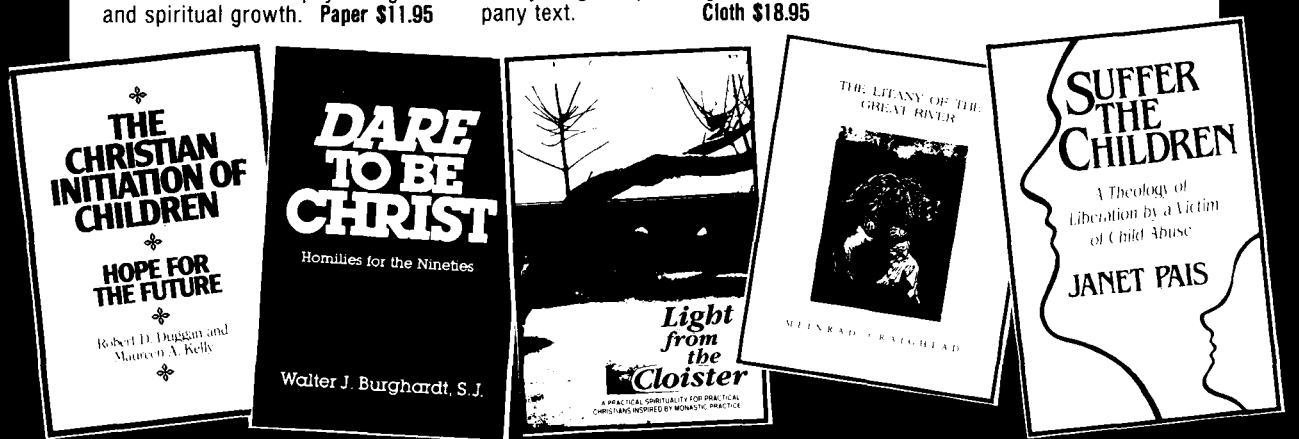
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Religion and the Life of the Intellect

In many intellectual circles the myth still circulates that religion is the preserve of the dim-witted and unlettered. Yet, recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, and amid inquisitive people generally, there's an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This fascination is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious renaissance entail embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or superpatriotism. Nor does it imply a retreat from working for peace, justice, or human dignity. Rather, there's an awareness that, as Jean Bethke Elshtain put it, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political choices which are far more durable than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and technology.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this return to religion, and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual engagement with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Schumacher, Mounier, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King Jr., and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary and philosophical riches offered by such greats as Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Silone, Maritain, Waugh, Merton, C.S. Lewis, Walker Percy, Flannery O'Connor, and Graham Greene.

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